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THE TWENTIETH  
CENTURY MOLIÈRE:  
BERNARD SHAW

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, THE GRESHAM PRESS, WOKING AND LONDON



# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MOLIÈRE: BERNARD SHAW

BY  
AUGUSTIN HAMON

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BY  
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It is always so more or less : the novelties of one generation are only the resuscitated fashions of the generation before last.—SHAW.

Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*, p. xxiii.



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## EPISTLE DEDICATORY





## TO GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

MY DEAR SHAW,—

A good many years have passed since in January 1904 I sent a young friend of mine who was studying in London to see you, with a letter suggesting that he should undertake the French translation of your *Man and Superman*, which had not then attained its present world-wide success, but which was already attracting much interest. My friend's youth alarmed you, since, so you wrote, for the translation of your plays there was requisite the dexterity of a Sardou. The fame which your work and your personality have now acquired was then but dawning. It was only in Germany that your plays had received an enthusiastic welcome; America was beginning to understand you; England still seemed to ignore you. But you yourself were well aware that your plays were masterpieces which must sooner or later inevitably receive full recognition. You were, then, perfectly

## The Twentieth Century Molière

right in desiring that the man who should translate your work into French should have the dramatic touch of a Sardou. It was with stupefaction, therefore, that in this same letter I read your request that I should undertake the translation. I was altogether unaware of possessing the talent of a Sardou! My knowledge of English was somewhat slender. It enabled me to plod through scientific treatises, but was inadequate for the proper understanding of pure literature. With the aid of my wife, who is almost as much at home in English as in her mother tongue, I had acquired some knowledge of your comedies. I admired the ideas to which you give utterance in *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* and in *Man and Superman*. But I was unable to grasp the liveliness, the brisk movement, and the wit, of the dialogue; I had no real understanding either of the characters you had created or of the delicious and piquant comedy with which your plays are permeated. I had done no original work in the field of pure literature, had never written a poem, not even a single line. A good many years earlier, in 1890, I had indeed dreamed of writing a novel, to be entitled *Vainqueurs*; but this novel, sketched in collaboration with my friend Georges Bachot, joint-author of my earliest books, has never got beyond the stage of first outlines. I had written nothing

## Epistle Dedicatory

more than studies in hygiene, sociology, and collective psychology.<sup>1</sup>

It was to a man burdened with these scientific impedimenta that you made your proposal that he should undertake, in conjunction with his wife, the translation of dramas! You must agree that we had good reason for surprise, even though we were familiar with your reputation as an eccentric. For not merely had my previous work been restricted to the field of sociological science, but further, within the scientific and literary world of France I was regarded as an Outsider, since I belonged to no coterie, and mixed but little with the world, choosing my associates from the environment of the Socialist and Anarchist International—above all during the seven years in which I edited “*L’Humanité Nouvelle*,” an international review founded in 1897 by myself in conjunction with Elisée and Elie Reclus, Guillaume De Greef, Eugène de Roberty, Clémence Royer, Edmond Picard, and Emile Verhaeren.<sup>2</sup> I contributed to

<sup>1</sup> Some of the author's earlier works may be enumerated here. *Etudes sur les eaux potables et le plomb*, 1884-5, of which translations have been published in Italian, Turkish, Polish, and Spanish; *L’Agonie d’une Société*, 1889; *Ministère et Mélinite*, 1891 (Studies in Contemporary History and Sociology); *La France sociale et politique*, 1890, 2 vols., 1891, 1 vol.; *Socialisme et Anarchisme*, 1895, with a Preface by Alfred Naquet, translated into Spanish, Italian, and Russian.—TRANSLATORS’ NOTE.

<sup>2</sup> “*L’Humanité Nouvelle*” was a monthly review. Its contributors numbered many of the most eminent among the advanced thinkers

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none of the great dailies, and the solid and respectable reviews were closed to me on account of my ideas. They could not give a favourable reception to anything written by the author of *La Psychologie du Militaire professionnel*, *La Psychologie de l'Anarchiste socialiste*, and *Déterminisme et Responsabilité*.<sup>1</sup> I was too much of an iconoclast, my tendencies were too destructive. Nor did I number among my intimates any Parisian actor-managers.

The notoriety I enjoyed, far from being of service to you, might even be detrimental.

of the day, such as Peter Kropotkin, Alfred Russell Wallace, Bernard Shaw, Emil Vandervelde, Hector Denis, Havelock Ellis, Jules Destrée, Charles Letourneau, Ladislaz Kozlowski, Kristian B. Aars, Domela Nieuwenhuis, J. Crosby, Leonid Andreyeff, Gorki, Tolstoi, etc. The review ceased publication towards the end of 1903.—TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

<sup>1</sup> *La Psychologie du Militaire professionnel* was published in November 1893, and made a considerable sensation in France, for the reason that the author's main contention was that the army is a school for crime. Indeed, this assertion aroused a scandal, but no legal proceedings were instituted against author or publisher. The book has been translated into German, Bulgarian, Spanish, Italian (two translations), Portuguese, and Russian. The war which rages while this note is penned has amply justified Hamon's general conclusions concerning militarism, which exists wherever there are armies, for the object of armies is war, and militarism proves itself to be to-day what the author described it twenty years ago, "a school of violence, murder, rape, pillage, and arson."

*La Psychologie de l'Anarchiste Socialiste* was published in Paris in 1895, and has been translated into Spanish and Czech.

*Déterminisme et Responsabilité* was published in Paris in 1897, and has been translated into English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The work reproduces the substance of a course of lectures delivered in 1897 at l'Université Nouvelle de Bruxelles.—TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

## Epistle Dedicatory

Professional literary men and habitués of the theatre were already demanding your permission to translate some of your plays. Yet it was my wife and myself whom you asked to undertake this work. It seemed to me that you had a whim for throwing difficulties in the way of a knowledge of your writings in France. I hesitated to accept the arduous labour of translating your plays into French. Whilst I might feel myself equal to the rendering of your minor political and economic works, it seemed to me that your comedies, if not beyond my powers, were at least quite outside my scope. I did not consider myself to be the Sardou whom you needed. You insisted, however, with your Irish obstinacy, which is even greater than my own obstinacy as a Breton.<sup>1</sup> And it was the Breton who gave way.

In a letter you wrote me at a later date you explained yourself as follows: "I knew very well what I was about. The dramatic liveliness of the reports you gave of some of the Socialist Congresses [the allusion is to my volume *Le Socialisme et le Congrès de Londres* and to some of my articles in "L'Humanité Nouvelle" during the years 1900 and 1901] had satisfied me that you were the man to undertake a French version of my plays. As far

<sup>1</sup> Hamon was born at Nantes in January 1862, and comes of mixed Breton and Angevin stock.—TRANSLATORS' NOTE.

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as an intimate knowledge of English was concerned, it was enough that Madame Hamon possessed this. You understood the modern social organism, you knew human nature ; and it was these points that were essential."

Subsequently, when I knew you better, I realized that you were quite indifferent to the accumulation of obstacles in the way of your drama. You were indifferent because you knew that destiny always fulfils itself, and that your drama must inevitably become popular and classical in France. From other persons I learned, in addition, why you urged me to translate your plays. You wished, above all, that the revolutionary thought with which they are impregnated, equally in respect of matter and of form, should not become attenuated, sugared, and vulgarized ; and you mistrusted, with good reason, the habitués of the theatre, humbugs more or less, with their minds sophisticated by the atmosphere in which they live. You wanted a translator who would give the lie to the proverb *traduttore, traditore* ; one who could reproduce in its integrity the revolutionary spirit of your work. I could not, like Marchbanks in your *Candida*, cry out " I am the man ! " for I did not know that I was the man. But you knew. Acquainted with my writings, acquainted with " L'Humanité Nouvelle," you knew how closely akin were our

## Epistle Dedicatory

views concerning capitalist society, concerning authority, concerning social determinism. . . . You knew that I should relive your comedies because I should rethink them, so much was their spirit, so much were their ideas, my own.

You were insistent, I gave way, and my wife and I set to work, more than ten years ago now. The task was formidable and arduous, but intensely pleasurable to us both. Impressed by the profundity of the ideas, by the penetrating, terse, and logical criticism of society, I gradually came to entertain an enthusiastic admiration for your plays, which voiced so many of the ideas which I myself had at heart. Yet their essential comedy remained largely unperceived. I saw only the substance of the ideas, and this was so intensely luminous as actually to blind me to the spirit of comedy. It was not until at Brussels, on February 7, 1907, *Candida* was staged, that my eyes were opened, although still incompletely, to the beauties of your drama.

In 1906, M. Reding, manager of the Théâtre du Parc, approached us, you will remember, for permission to play *Candida*, having heard of the play from Yvette Guilbert and her husband Dr. Schiller. He read our manuscript and accepted the play for his literary *matinées*. Excellently staged and admirably interpreted, it enjoyed a favourable

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reception at the hands of the public and the critics. At all four representations the house was packed, and the audience smiled, laughed, even roared with laughter. This laughter astonished me, shocked me indeed to such an extent that I could hardly restrain myself from exclaiming out loud against the stupidity of this audience which found food for laughter in ideas so just, so great, so penetrating, and at times so bitter. But the audience was right, whilst I, who had failed to recognize the intense and powerful comedy of *Candida*, was the fool. When I came to think the matter over, the veil was lifted from my eyes, and at length I understood the enormous comic force of your drama, which makes us laugh even in the most tragic scenes, even when the characters are expressing most serious ideas. The reception of our translation by the critics convinced me that the dramatic tongue was neither outside nor above our powers. As you told me, I had up to that time had the power of making people think, but I had now the power of making them laugh while making them think.

In a conscientious but somewhat unsympathetic study of your dramatic work which M. Augustin Filon published in the "Revue des deux mondes" for October 1905, he made a passing allusion to the name of Molière. Eighteen months later it



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fell to my task to give the preliminary lecture when *Candida* was played at the Théâtre du Parc, and also to give a more detailed lecture at the New University of Brussels. In preparing these lectures I had to study several of your plays, and the involuntary approximation which M. Filon had made of your name with that of Molière gave birth in my mind to the idea of comparing your technique with Molière's. To my surprise, I perceived that there was a close kinship between the two schools of drama. In my lectures I pointed this out, and was the first to draw attention to the resemblance.<sup>1</sup> The parallelism was merely sketched in embryo. The study was continued along the same lines, though it still remained incomplete, in an article which appeared in July 1908, in "The Nineteenth Century and After," under the title *Un Nouveau Molière*. The complete form of the comparison of your work and that of Molière was not attained until the following year, when I gave a course of lectures on the subject at the Sorbonne.

Paris followed the lead of Brussels, and in April and May 1908 *Candida* was played at the Théâtre des Arts. This introduction of the critics and of the Parisian public to your drama was unfortunate.

<sup>1</sup> The lecture at the New University of Brussels was published under the title *Bernard Shaw et son Théâtre* in "La Revue Socialiste" (September 1907), and in "Finsk Tidskrift" (Helsingfors).

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The company was a talented one, and their interpretation was painstaking, but it was completely falsified by the transformation of the Molièresque figure of Burgess into a wearisome "comic man." As you are aware, I was unable to prevent this vulgarization of your splendid *Candida*. With real distress I attended the final rehearsals, doing all that was possible to attenuate the clumsiness and stupidity of the crime that was being perpetrated against art. You know how painful I found the dress rehearsal and the first night. The result was what I had anticipated, and there came a moment when the actors, whose interpretation was in the vein of tragedy, could hardly go on, so harassed were they by the perpetual smiles and laughter of the audience. As for the critics, they completely lost their bearings. They felt, confusedly, that the interpretation was inadequate. They did not and they could not understand the play, because all its values had been falsified. The result was that some of the critics wrote unfavourably of *Candida*, while even those who liked the play, recognizing its poetic force, sensing its tragical greatness, and understanding some of its ideas and characters, yet failed to grasp the intense spirit of comedy, which is as characteristic of *Candida* as of all your other plays.

This unfortunate experience in Paris could not

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fail to retard the appreciation of your drama, that drama which is destined in France to enjoy an enormous popular success, when it comes to be played in the comical, farcical, or Molièresque vein, for then all the wealth of its wit will be perceived. Yet out of evil came good.

This transmutation of the Shavian comedy into a wearisome, pseudo-psychological comedy, and its results in the interpretation of *Candida*, impressed me with the importance of the farcical element in the serious comedy that deals with ideas, characters, and customs. It enabled me to understand why Molière had been the leader of all writers of farce. I grasped why it was that Molière was a great writer and a profound philosopher without ever ceasing to make use of the methods of medieval farce and the tricks of a clown at the fair. It recalled to my mind the advice you had yourself given me to disregard all academic counsels on the construction of "well-written plays," and to learn my trade by going to the circus and studying the methods of the clown. The result was that I saw more clearly all the resemblances between your comedy and that of Molière.

Meanwhile I had applied to the Faculty of Letters of the University of Paris for authorization to deliver a course of lectures upon your drama. I was unaware when I made my application that

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those who give such lectures must possess a doctor's degree of a French university or some equivalent degree of a foreign university, or must at least have published books of such merit, in the opinion of the professorial body, as to entitle their author to rank as a doctor of letters or of science. When I was informed of these facts I hardly expected that my application would be granted, for I had no university degree. I was therefore agreeably surprised, in June 1908, to receive permission to give the proposed course of lectures during the session 1908-9. As your wonderful William expresses it in the only commonplace he utters, "You never can tell."

It was in February 1909 that I delivered my lectures at the Sorbonne, and I repeated them the following month at the New University of Brussels. In both places the ten lectures were well attended.

The present volume presents the first six of these lectures. If the reading public receives the book as favourably as the audience received the lectures, I shall publish in a second volume those parts of my course which are not reproduced here, treating of the ideas, the philosophy, ethics, and metaphysics, to which your drama gives utterance.

Although a number of books have already been published upon you and your writings, never before, I believe, has your dramatic work been analysed

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with the like precision in respect of its technique, its characters, and its ideas.

I hope that those of my compatriots who read the present study will be animated with the desire to read your comedies and to see them played. I hope to continue the work begun by my lectures and by the articles I have published in numerous reviews. I hope it will facilitate the task of the critics in passing judgment on plays constructed in accordance with a classical technique which they have forgotten. I hope to raise up in the younger literary world of France admirers of your drama and students of your method. If to any degree—and I hope it will be to a great one—this volume achieves these ends, it will have done much service to French literature and to dramatic art. To the renovation of the drama a renascence of classicism is essential, and this renascence cannot take place until the French playwrights enter the path which you have reopened. Speed the day!

AUGUSTIN HAMON.

TY-AN-DIAOUL,  
PORT BLANC EN PENVÉNAN  
(CÔTES-DU-NORD, BRETAGNE).



# THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MOLIÈRE: BERNARD SHAW

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN

THROUGHOUT western Europe, during the years from 1887 to 1892, there was the dawn of a revival of the theatre. In Paris there were the Théâtre Libre with Antoine, and L'Œuvre with Lugné Poe ; in London, the Independent Theatre with Grein ; in Berlin, the Freie Bühne. These actor-managers were surrounded by numerous youthful satellites. They were all looking for a new formula of dramatic art. Yet their efforts were but tentative, with arrests and fresh starts. The search seemed vain, notwithstanding that the work of Ibsen had passed beyond the limits of the country of its birth, reaching Germany first of all, and then France and England, giving a general impression that new trails were being opened. Unfortunately, the realist work of the great Norwegian dramatist was not understood. People

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saw in it obscure symbolism, idealism in place of the realism which it truly embodied. Our young playwrights hastened to follow the master's example! Criticism came to a standstill. Like all other men, the dramatic critic follows the law of least resistance, for those who have to criticize plays like to do so with as little effort as possible. For this reason the critic is hostile to every new tendency. It throws him out of his bearings, forces him to reflect, to compare, to reason. What rubbish are all these innovations! What has been done before, what all the world has always seen, is much better. Thus the dramatic critics, when they saw the attempts of our bold young innovators, all cried out with one voice, "This is not a drama! There is no plot in it!"

The public, following like a flock of sheep, joined in the contemptuous chorus, and refused to go to see the plays of the new school. The young playwrights, therefore, gradually changed their methods. Dominated by the leaders of dramatic criticism, and yielding to the desire for popular success, they gave up their uncompromising notions of a theatrical renaissance and returned to a large extent to the dramatic forms that were dear to our fathers. The technique of Scribe gained the day. Such writers as Brieux, François de Curel, and Emil Fabre, to speak only of France



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(though in Germany and in England just the same thing happened), took to writing plays with plots resembling those of the younger Dumas and of Augier, laying stress upon dramatic incident rather than upon ideas, giving more place to intrigue and less to concepts.

Thus there ensued a return to a dramatic technique whose form really differs very little from that of the masters of the nineteenth century. It is true that certain forms that were dear to our grandmothers, such as the aside and the monologue, have almost disappeared ; but most of the conventional traditions have been maintained. According to our critics, the essence of the drama must always remain a conflict of sentiments and of passions. The duel of the sexes must be its leading theme, its mainspring, for in this we find the source of every emotion. The drama, they tell us, is emotion. Thus the misoneist critics conquered the philoneist spirit of the playwrights. Since they were not great artists, but merely writers of talent (and sometimes of very great talent), they allowed themselves to be domesticated, preferring dramatic cleverness to dramatic force, traditional form to new forms, an insufficiency of ideas to a surplus.

One man, George Bernard Shaw, would not submit to this process of domestication. A critic

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himself, he refused to subject himself to the law of the other critics. With quiet audacity and perfect calmness of mind he persisted in following his own vision, being convinced that he could see better and more clearly than the public, that he knew better than the critics. In spite of all and in opposition to all he remained himself, and himself only. In the end he has forced the public to accept him; but to do this he has required more time than was needed by such writers as Pinero, Jones, Donnay, Hervieu, Hauptmann, and Sudermann. These are talented writers, highly talented; but Bernard Shaw is a man of genius. They are clever technicians, but he is a profound thinker. The crowd, literate or uncultured, could not possibly care for him at first; for the public has no love of novelty and is always loath to perceive the beautiful in an unaccustomed manner. As Oscar Wilde has admirably expressed it: "As far as the public is concerned, every attempt to widen the field of treatment in artistic matters leads to disaster, and yet the progress of art and its vitality are largely dependent upon a continual widening of the field of treatment."

The artist, the great artist just as much as the great thinker, is necessarily a rebel. Neither in art, nor in philosophy, nor in the sciences is it possible for the man of strong individuality to see

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with the crowd or to act like the crowd. Artists and thinkers revolt against that which shocks their visions and their ideas. They become rebels, and thus contribute powerfully to progress, for of all the factors of progress revolt is the most important. But naturally by their revolt they shock the crowd.

Bernard Shaw certainly did not hesitate to shock the crowd, and therefore it took him twelve years—from 1892 to 1904—to force the English public to accept him. It is true that two years before the end of this period his plays received an enthusiastic welcome in Germany and the United States. In the States the vogue they rapidly obtained was largely due to two extremely able actors, Arnold Daly and Richard Mansfield. In England, if his plays were unsuccessful, they still made a noise, and he tells us that the sensation was so agreeable to him that he went on just as before. Thus among the amateurs of the drama and among men of letters there arose two parties—the Shavians and the anti-Shavians. Thanks to Bernard Shaw's tenacity and also to his unmistakable genius the former party triumphed. To a certain extent he forced the critics to disarm, and compelled the public to come to his plays. In fact, they came in crowds. Throughout the season of 1904-5, at the Royal Court Theatre, nothing was played but

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Bernard Shaw. The resistance of the public finally gave way before *John Bull's Other Island*, and henceforward success was assured. Bernard Shaw's fame in fashionable circles was definitely established by the attendance of King Edward VII at a performance of the play last named. Shaw became the licensed fool, the popular clown, or, at least, a man above the law.

What are the characteristics of the dramatic genius of Bernard Shaw, whose work, at first despised and reviled, has now become so greatly esteemed? Before we can answer this question we must consider the author's personality with which his writings are permeated. Has he not himself written : "I half suspect that those managers who have had most to do with me if asked to name the main obstacle to the performance of my plays would unhesitatingly and unanimously reply, 'The Author' "

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin, July 26, 1856, his parents being Irish Protestants. His father was an employee at the law-courts, and his mother was the daughter of a small country farmer. The father, having retired with a pension, realized it in cash, and became a grain merchant. He was poor ; that is to say, his income did not exceed two or three hundred a year. For him this was insufficient, for he considered him-

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self to belong to the upper class, having titled relatives, and his tastes required an expenditure three or four times greater than his income. Thus, without being in actual penury, the family was poor. It consisted of the father, George Carr Shaw; the mother, Lucinda Elisabeth Gurly; two daughters, Agnes and Lucy; and one son, Bernard, the youngest child. Agnes died in 1876. Lucy became a professional singer, and has published several books.

The father was lacking in energy, and was always in ill-luck. This is his son's own account, and we are further told: "In theory he was an ardent teetotaller, but in practice he was often a secret drinker. He was of sardonic mien, this concealing a profound sensibility." The mother was twenty years younger than her husband. An intelligent, energetic, and persevering woman, she had no regard for the innumerable prejudices of bourgeois society, was indifferent to public opinion, and acted according to her own judgment of what was right or expedient. We cannot describe her better than by saying that—fifty years ago—she was precisely what are to-day the most advanced among women. Musically gifted, and having a fine voice, she was by no means a good house-keeper; but she was a good mother, and exercised a powerful educative influence. Her son has

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her in mind in his description of Mrs. Clandon in *You Never Can Tell*.

The domestic environment was at once steeped in family prejudices (Shaw tells us somewhere that they used to speak of "the Shaws" as of "the Hohenzollerns" or of "the Romanoffs") and emancipated from social prejudices—a middle-class family always embarrassed for money. Finding the discipline of school life extremely irksome, the boy often played truant, spending much of his time in the Irish National Gallery. Hour after hour he wandered through the empty rooms, happy in the contemplation of the masterpieces on the walls. Urged by his natural curiosity, and having access to the works of Vasari, he soon became intimately acquainted with the lives of the great painters, and gained a thorough knowledge of Italian and Flemish art. He was also drawn to music, and in intercourse with his mother he gradually acquired considerable musical knowledge and trained powers of appreciation of the work of the great musicians; but while thus living in intimate communion with the masters of painting and of music he was in bad odour with the masters at school. In 1871 he left school to enter the employment of a Dublin land agent. Here he worked for five years, reaping an ample harvest, often unwittingly, of painful and

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bitter observations upon the under-currents of life in the families of the landed gentry and of the middle and lower middle class. He worked at his desk without enthusiasm, his sole desire here being to secure financial independence.

On the death of the father, the mother and the two daughters removed to London, where Bernard joined them four years later, the object of this change of residence being to give Lucy better opportunities of training as a singer. To gain a livelihood Mrs. Shaw herself taught singing and conducted singing classes in girls' schools. Up to the age of seventy she was still engaged in this occupation, and so great was her natural vigour that her son found it difficult to induce her to relinquish it even at this age.

In London, about the year 1876, Shaw entered the employment of the Edison Telephone Company. He was much interested in electricity and the other physical sciences, and pursued their study with ardour. But while following the work of Tyndall and of Helmholtz, and while perseveringly pursuing his initiation to scientific knowledge, he did not work much for the Edison Company.

His employment was ill-suited to his undisciplined nature, and in 1879, after having struggled against his own inclinations for three years, he left the office for good. He had no means of

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livelihood, but his mother was at hand. She helped him and provided for him, he being then twenty-three years of age. They both lived upon her musical earnings. "I have been blamed," he writes somewhere, "for not having helped my mother, but for having lived at her expense. It is true that my mother worked for me instead of telling me to work for her. This was a good thing, for it rendered it possible for me to make a man of myself instead of remaining a slave." The future showed that Mrs. Shaw was right when, for love of her son, she helped in the development of a man to the burgeoning of whose brain we owe masterpieces.

Shaw, having nothing more to do, continued to work without pause. He left the libraries only to visit the museums, and if he was not to be found in either of these he was attending some musical recital, for which, as a talented accompanist, he could easily secure a free pass.

As an Irishman he was a born debater; an amateur of lengthy discourses; of assemblies where people speak or narrate, visiting these just as much to listen as to speak. He became a member of the Zeletical Club, next of the Dialectical Society, next of the Hampstead Historic Club, and a little later of an economists' club, which developed into the British Economical Association. These were



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societies for the holding of private meetings to discuss political, social, and philosophical problems. Such debating societies are extremely numerous in Great Britain, and constitute a permanent and essential part of the political life of intelligent bourgeois and working-class society—they are, unfortunately, unknown in France. In meetings of this sort Bernard Shaw developed his powers as debater, public speaker, and economist. Here he met James Lecky and Sidney Webb, and formed a friendship with both; Lecky, in especial, exercised a considerable influence over him. Thus Bernard Shaw, following a common English practice, soon engaged in open-air speaking. At street corners, from the pavement, from a cart, in the parks, he spoke to all who would listen. The passers-by, their attention caught by a few words, sometimes remained to listen, but at other times went on quickly about their business or became part of the audience of other speakers who had succeeded better than he in gaining the ear of the public. For in this matter Shaw himself had not as yet much success—this long, red-bearded fellow, carelessly dressed, whose own comrades called him a Bohemian. As we have said, he was living at this time upon his mother's bounty, and her earnings were insufficient to allow him to spend much money upon clothes. One of his friends,

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the late Hubert Bland, in memoirs published not long ago, said that Shaw's dress at this time reeked of poverty—his long overcoat which had once been black was now greenish, his tall hat was furry and dishevelled.

He failed to gain the ear of the public, although his speeches were adorned with witty sallies and amusing anecdotes. But it happened one day in Hyde Park that a band began to play near the cart from which he was addressing a sparse audience—in fact, hardly any one was listening to him, but the band soon drew a crowd. When the music ceased and Shaw was once more able to make himself heard he had a large audience. By his sallies, his jokes, his anecdotes, and his paradoxes he conquered this audience. At last he had gained the ear of the British public. This was a lesson he could never forget. From this moment dates his love of that advertisement of which he has ever since made so extensive a use.

It was at this time, in the year 1881, that Bernard Shaw became a vegetarian and a teetotaller. Being a poor man, he had been accustomed to go to cheap restaurants, but found even these too dear. Moreover, there were always the same things to eat, always beef and mutton, cooked in exactly the same way. Worse still, the atmosphere was always poisonous with the smell

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of burnt fat. Bernard Shaw, therefore, went instead to the vegetarian restaurants, finding there more varied cheer at a lower price, and escaping the offensive fumes.

In the year 1883, in the course of his unflagging attendance at public meetings, he heard Henry George speak. This was a revelation. He now recognized the enormous importance of the economic problem, at which hitherto he had glanced merely in passing. He read Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* and Karl Marx's *Capital*. He became a Socialist. But his critical and iconoclastic spirit made it impossible for him to worship at the shrine of Marx or to subscribe to all this writer's economic doctrines.

Yet he did not spend the whole of his time at public meetings and debating societies, in open-air speaking, in museums, or in libraries; he worked also at his desk. As the fruit of this work we have five novels. Naturally he tried to get them published, going from firm to firm, and getting in return, as he himself has told us, nothing further "than an encouraging compliment or two from the most dignified of the London and American publishers, who unanimously declined to venture their capital upon me. Now, it is clear that a novel cannot be too bad to be worth publishing, provided it is a novel at all, and not merely an inep-

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itude. It certainly is possible for a novel to be too good to be worth publishing; but I doubt if this was the case with mine. I might indeed have consoled myself by saying with Whately, 'These silly people don't know their own silly business'; for when these novels of mine did subsequently blunder into type to fill up gaps in Socialist magazines financed by generous friends, one or two specimens took shallow root like weeds, and trip me up from time to time to this day." <sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding his unsuccess in the search for a publisher, Bernard Shaw was in daily intercourse with some of the most brilliant personalities of the younger generation—artists, authors, economists, and journalists. Among his intimates were James Leigh Joynes, Sydney Olivier, recently Governor of Jamaica, Henry Hyde Champion, Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt, secretary of the Humanitarian League, Hubert Bland, Graham Wallas, William Archer, the well-known critic, Bingham Walkley, now dramatic critic of the "Times," Sidney Webb, Annie Besant, already famous, and, finally, William Morris.

Some of these friends were editors of periodicals. Champion, for instance, was in charge of the

<sup>1</sup> George Meredith, who was reader to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, refused one of Bernard Shaw's novels.

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Socialist review "To-Day," which subsequently passed into the hands of James Leigh Joynes and Belfort Bax; while Annie Besant was editor of "Our Corner." Bernard Shaw's novels, subsequently to be reissued as *Novels of My Nonage*, found hospitality in the columns of these periodicals. *An Unsocial Socialist* and *Cashel Byron's Profession* appeared in "To-Day"; *The Irrational Knot* and *Love Among the Artists* were published in "Our Corner." These Socialist periodicals had but a small circle of readers, so that the novels remained unnoticed by the general public. Being, however, original, paradoxical, and bold, they attracted the attention of William Morris, Robert Louis Stevenson, William Archer, and other distinguished or popular writers, who regarded these immature works as presaging the production of masterpieces.

The novels have since been republished several times in England and the United States; they have been translated into German, and *The Irrational Knot* appeared two years ago in French. We do not find in them, to any appreciable extent, either plot or dramatic incident; nor do they contain, to speak strictly, descriptions of mental states, exceptional or commonplace. They are social theses, or rather the framework for the presentation of numerous ideas, some profound, some trivial, and some exquisite, expressed in paradoxical and witty

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terms. In the Bernard Shaw of the novels is foreshadowed the Bernard Shaw of the plays which have made their author famous.

In *The Irrational Knot* Conolly, an electrical engineer, marries a girl against her father's wishes. Mrs. Conolly is of aristocratic birth, while her husband is of the middle class. Differences soon arise between the pair, and she takes as a lover a former wooer, a man of her own set. Conolly is a philosopher who knows that what must be will be. He leaves his wife to her lover and devotes himself to electricity and to music. The wife runs away with the lover, who soon abandons her. Conolly has regained his liberty, since his wife has left him, and continues his musical pastimes and his electrical researches.

In *Love Among the Artists* we see a number of women, actresses, pianists, and singers, more or less Bohemian, some of them clever performers and some genuine artists, exploited by managers, pestered by their pupils, but continuing all the time the pursuit of their profession, of their art, to which they are devoted body and soul. Through this world of artists there passes a composer, Jack, a man of original and independent mind, loving to shock and to scandalize. These figures serve as a text on which to hang witty and caustic diatribes against those artists who, aspiring to academic rank, devote

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themselves to the greater classical art although they are incapable even of petty art, and against the public which crowds to admire, without understanding, picture shows and concerts.

In *An Unsocial Socialist*, Trefusis, a rich man with a charming wife, realizes one day that the fortune he enjoys is derived from the exploitation of the hands employed in his father's factory at Manchester. Feeling unable to continue to live upon wealth produced by the toil of ill-paid workers, Trefusis abandons his luxury and leaves his wife, to live in the country and to devote himself to Socialist propaganda. His wife pursues him and finds him. He continues to love her, he says, but he sends her back to London, where she dies, in part from grief. Trefusis, however, is by no means distressed at this. After a while he returns to live the life of a rich man, his chief interest being to scandalize his associates by the utterance of witty paradoxes and by the enunciation of truths which it is customary to ignore, but which in his view ought to be proclaimed from the housetops.

\* \* \* \* \*

This brief summary of these amusing novels will show that they do not belong to the domain of pure literature. Their author is not an advocate of art for art's sake. His main interest lies in social problems ; he is, as we have seen, a Socialist.

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As a Socialist, he was one of the first members of the Fabian Society, founded in 1884. Here, with his friends Sidney Webb, Graham Wallas, and Sydney Olivier, he played a leading part. At the Fabian Society he lectured and debated, continuing all the while his Socialist propaganda in the open air and continuing his work as a journalist, for he had now obtained employment as a critic.

The amusing passage in which he describes his abandonment of novel-writing for the work of critic must be quoted in full : " I had no taste for what is called ' popular art,' no respect for popular morality, no belief in popular religion, no admiration for popular heroics. As an Irishman, I could pretend to patriotism neither for the country I had abandoned nor the country that had ruined it. As a humane person I detested violence and slaughter, whether in war, sport, or the butcher's yard. I was a Socialist, detesting our anarchical scramble for money, and believing in equality as the only possible permanent basis of social organization, discipline, subordination, good manners, and selection of fit persons for high functions. Fashionable life, open on indulgent terms to unencumbered ' brilliant ' persons, I could not endure."

Bernard Shaw found the life of " good society " intolerable. His work in the land agent's office had early displayed to him its seamy side. His



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views of life were altogether different from those of the average 'respectable' man. He was trying to find some suitable occupation for his powers when a friend of his, an oculist, gave him the clue to the understanding of his own real condition. Shaw writes: "He tested my eyesight one evening and informed me that it was quite uninteresting to him because it was 'normal.' I naturally took this to mean that it was like everybody else's; but he rejected this construction as paradoxical, and hastened to explain to me that I was an exceptional and highly fortunate person optically, 'normal' sight conferring the power of seeing things accurately, and being enjoyed by only about 10 per cent. of the population, the remaining 90 per cent. being abnormal." I immediately perceived the explanation of my want of success in fiction. My mind's eye, like my body's, was 'normal'; it saw things differently from other people's eyes, and saw them better.

"This revelation produced a considerable effect on me. At first it struck me that I might live by selling my works to the 10 per cent. who were like myself; but a moment's reflection showed me that these must all be as penniless as I, and that we could not live by, so to speak, taking in one another's washing. How to earn daily bread by my pen was then the problem. Had I been a

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practical, commonsense, money-loving Englishman, the matter would have been easy enough : I should have put on a pair of abnormal spectacles and aberrated my vision to the liking of the 90 per cent. of potential book-buyers. But I was so prodigiously self-satisfied with my superiority, so flattered by my abnormal normality, that the resource of hypocrisy never occurred to me. Better see rightly on a pound a week than squint on a million. The question was, how to get the pound a week."

The answer he himself found was to make himself critic and jester, for "every despot must have one disloyal subject to keep him sane." He, with his normal vision, would be the disloyal subject of that despot, the sovereign public whose vision is abnormal. He therefore adopted the profession of critic, becoming the art-critic of the "World" on the introduction of his friend William Archer, himself literary critic of the "Pall Mall Gazette" (at that time edited by W. T. Stead). Shaw was also appointed literary critic of "Truth."

In the year 1888 Bernard Shaw joined the staff of the "Star," the halfpenny evening paper just then founded by T. P. O'Connor. Here he was given the post of musical critic, for that of dramatic critic had already been allotted to his friend Walkley, and T. P. O'Connor, fearing his Socialist

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tendencies, would not allow him to act as literary critic. In the English press criticism in general occupies a place which is unknown in France. In matters musical, artistic, literary, and scientific, the London and provincial papers usually aim at the publication of intelligent expert criticism, quite independent of commercial influences, though often dull and hostile to novelty. It is very different in the French press, for here criticism plays an insignificant part. With two or three honourable exceptions—those of the younger literary and artistic reviews—what passes here by the name of criticism is restricted to the publication of editorial notes and to the distribution of praise—all paid for directly or indirectly. In fact, in the French press serious criticism does not exist. It is very different in England, where criticism not only exists but is often a power when it is impartial and intelligent, when it is the work of competent persons who can claim to be “the right men in the right place.” Such was Bernard Shaw, and as such he immediately made his mark in the world of criticism. From 1888 to 1890 his musical criticism in the “Star” attracted much attention both from the general public and in the journalistic world on account of its sparkle, its humour, its light and penetrating sallies, covering a sound musical knowledge. These critiques, signed by the pseudonym

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of "Corno Di Basseto," became so notable that the editor of the "World" offered him the post of musical critic to that paper. Having accepted it, from this new platform he distributed praise and blame week by week in a self-confident tone. He now abandoned the pseudonym and signed his contributions G. B. S. These initials have become celebrated, for it is by these that Shaw is commonly known in England. His weekly budget, full of witty anecdotes, piquant thrusts, extraordinary comparisons, and audacious paradoxes, was an exaltation of Mozart and of Wagner, and a categorical affirmation of the infallibility of the writer's own critical discernment. He is never weary of telling us that his wares are good, and that no one else can offer anything of equal quality. In actual fact, we are assured by competent judges that in this capacity of musical critic he displayed one of the most comprehensive and one of the most penetrating minds of our time. It was in the "World" that appeared the first draft of his studies on Wagner, subsequently published, in 1898, as *The Perfect Wagnerite*. Musicians assure us that this commentary on Wagner deserves to be read and to be remembered.

While thus making use of the knowledge he had acquired in association with his mother, musician by profession, he interested himself at the same

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time in the theatre. As far back as 1885, William Archer, having adapted the scenario of a French play, *La Ceinture Dorée*, asked his friend Shaw to write the dialogue for him. Shaw agreed, and the first act was soon finished. He told Archer this, adding: "Tell me again about your scenario; I have not quite got it into my head yet!" Archer burst out laughing, and said: "My dear fellow, this is absurd, and your method is altogether impossible! I won't have anything more to do with it. Our collaboration is at an end before it has begun." Shaw, however, determined to finish the second act, and insisted on reading it to Archer. When he reached the climax of this second act, he looked up at Archer and found him fast asleep. "Well," said Shaw to himself, "it is clear that I am not much of a playwright." He put away the unfinished play, and it was seven years before he again turned his hand to the drama. Archer's nap cost us seven years of Bernard Shaw's life as a dramatist!

It was in 1889 that Ibsen's dramas, so realist and revolutionary in substance, although traditional in technique, were first staged in London, *A Doll's House* being presented at the Independent Theatre. Bernard Shaw was powerfully impressed, and the result of his study of Ibsen's works was the writing of his little volume *The Quintessence of*

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*Ibsenism*, published in 1891. In this book, which attracted much notice in the literary and dramatic world, Ibsen was defended, preached, and maintained against the greatest living playwrights. As far as Great Britain was concerned, he was the only dramatic author whose works could be produced at the Independent Theatre, for in the autumn of 1892 Grein had been unable, despite his best endeavours, to find a single British author whose work he considered worthy to appear upon its boards. "In this national emergency," writes Bernard Shaw in one of his amusing Prefaces, "I proposed to Mr. Grein that he should boldly announce a play by me." The manager agreed, and Shaw disinterred the unfinished play of which mention has just been made. He completed it by adding a third act, gave it, as he says, a far-fetched and mock-scriptural title (*Widowers' Houses*), and—but let him speak for himself, "handed it over to Mr. Grein, who launched it at the public in the Royalty Theatre with all its original tomfooleries on its head. It made a sensation out of all proportion to its merits or even its demerits, and I at once became infamous as a dramatist. The first performance was sufficiently exciting. The Socialists and Independents applauded me furiously on principle; the ordinary playgoing first-nighters hooted me frantically on

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the same ground; I, being at that time in some practice as what is impolitely called a 'mob orator,' made a speech before the curtain; the newspapers discussed the play for a whole fortnight, not only in the ordinary theatrical notices and criticisms but in leading articles and letters; and finally the text of the play was published. . . . I had not achieved a success, but I had provoked an uproar; and the sensation was so agreeable that I resolved to try again."

In the following year, in 1893, in the leisure time left him from his occupations as musical critic and Socialist propagandist, he wrote *The Philanderer*, which could not be staged, for the Independent Theatre had not among its company an actor competent to undertake the part of Charteris. "Immediately," he tells us, "I threw it aside, and, returning to the vein I had worked in *Widowers' Houses*, wrote a third play, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, on a social subject of tremendous force." Shaw now ran his head against the wall of the censorship, for the production was prohibited. The censor was shocked by a play whose heroine was a procuress. Putting this manuscript away in his desk, he set to work once more and wrote a fourth piece, for, as he himself puts it, "man is a creature of habit. You cannot write three plays and then stop." The new piece was *Arms and the Man*,

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which was produced by Miss Florence Farr at the Avenue Theatre, having a run of eleven weeks, from April 21 to July 7, 1894.

His musical criticism in the "World" and the noise made about his plays had introduced Bernard Shaw, if not into the circle of the theatrical managers, at least into that of the journalists. The result was that when, in January 1895, Mr. Frank Harris became editor of the "Saturday Review," he offered the position of dramatic critic to Bernard Shaw. Shaw gladly accepted this hospitality from the Conservatives, for, as he wrote to me, "the Radical papers find me too revolutionary for their taste." For three years, from January 1895 to May 1898, Bernard Shaw wrote theatrical criticism for the "Saturday Review," signing his articles with his now well-known initials. Just as in the "World" he had conducted a crusade on behalf of Wagner, so now in the "Saturday" he conducted a crusade on behalf of Ibsen and against Shakespeare. Again and again he turned upon Shakespeare to destroy this English idol, showing how lamentably poor is his philosophy and how his plays are lacking in psychology. But, as an impartial writer, he found pleasure in insisting upon the force of Shakespeare's comedy, upon the music of his language, and upon his unrivalled art as a story-teller. It has repeatedly been asserted that Shaw has proclaimed



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his own plays to be better than those of Shakespeare. This is incorrect. The famous phrase "Better than Shakespeare," which heads the Preface to his *Three Plays for Puritans*, is followed by a note of interrogation. It is none the less true that he criticized the Bard and treated him with some disdain. While thus dethroning the god Shakespeare he set up an altar to Ibsen, whose plays contain both psychology and philosophy, and who is as unromantic as possible. This last characteristic could not fail to be especially pleasing to Shaw, for the romantic is his pet aversion, and he attacks it at every opportunity. For three years Bernard Shaw carried on his campaign against dramatic pharisaism, displaying marvellous wit, a wealth of ideas and of original views, his usual pleasant vein of paradox, and his beautiful style. So masterly was his criticism that in the year 1906 James Huneker, an eminent American critic, published in two volumes a selection of Shaw's articles (*Dramatic Opinions and Essays*), and the book has run through several editions. Such, too, was the force of his work that he compelled people to accept Ibsen as among the greatest of living playwrights, and put an end to the uncritical worship of Shakespeare. As a further and remarkable result he succeeded, to paraphrase his own words, in establishing for all time his own literary prestige,

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effecting this by the vigour of his dogmatic assertions, by continued insistence upon his own merits as a wit, a controversialist, a maker of paradox, and as a penetrating analyst of the human mind and of human affairs.

In the interim, to distract his mind from the labours of dramatic and artistic criticism, he published an essay entitled *The Sanity of Art*, a counterblast to *Degeneration*, a ponderous work (now almost entirely forgotten) by Max Nordau, published in 1895. But where he chiefly found relaxation was in his incessant activities as a Socialist. Socialism is his passion even more than the drama, for above all Shaw is an iconoclast, a subverter, and Socialism is the platform from which he attacks the existing capitalist society, that destroyer of human lives and energies.

Shaw, reading these pages in proof, entered a protest here, contending that he was not an iconoclast but an economist, and adding: "The love of economics is the mainspring of all the virtues: economics is the art of intensifying life; political and social economy are intellectual diversions; but vital economy is the philosopher's stone. Above all things, I detest waste."

\* \* \* \* \*

Bernard Shaw, then, is a Socialist, and from the first, as member of the Executive Committee, played

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an important part in the life and work of the Fabian Society. As he once wrote to me: "I am always in the camarilla of any democratic organization to which I may belong—understanding by the term 'camarilla' the little group of persons who love to defend the interests of the community, who are willing to do the hard work of the society, and who are capable of doing it." If the camarilla is tyrannical, this does not alarm him, for, he tells us, he has no objection to tyranny when he is himself one of the tyrants. Thus he became one of the benevolent despots of the Fabian Society. In 1889 his fellow-members entrusted him with the editorship of *The Fabian Essays in Socialism*, the famous volume of which new editions continually make their appearance.

Two of the essays were his own work, *The Economic Basis of Socialism* and *The Transition to Social Democracy*. Here we have a plain exposition, cold, clear, and unsentimental, of the social and economic phenomena which have led to the private appropriation of land and to the constitution of classes, and which will inevitably lead to the transformation of the existing capitalist society into a Socialist society. This evolution pursues a necessary course, and the function of the Socialists is to hasten it. The author does not indulge in any rhetoric; at most there are two or three passages

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in which his indignation with the injustices of capitalist society makes itself manifest. Shaw is not a revolutionary in the sense of a belief that social transformation will occur catastrophically as the result of a sudden and brusque movement of the masses. He explains the grounds that lead to his anti-catastrophic views, and favours the expropriation of the capitalists by a process of compensation, the money requisite for this purpose being obtained by a graduated income tax. The circulation of the *Fabian Essays* among the English bourgeoisie was enormous, and in the last twenty-five years more than fifty thousand copies have been sold.

This is a suitable place for a brief account of the Fabian Society, whose development was greatly influenced by Bernard Shaw, and which in its turn exercised a powerful influence on British politics and British Socialism. The task will be an easy one, for it is merely necessary to follow the account given by Shaw himself in his pamphlet, *The Fabian Society: What has it Done?* and to reproduce the substance of what I myself wrote seventeen years ago in "Die Gesellschaft" as part of a study of Socialism in England.

The Fabian Society is named after Fabius Cunctator, expressing its tactics in its choice of a name. "The Fabian Society consists of Socialists. It aims at the reorganization of society

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by the emancipation of land and industrial capital from individual and class ownerships, and the vesting of them in the community for the general benefit." Such is the actual wording of the Fabian Basis, which is subscribed to by all those who join the society. The Fabian Society is therefore Socialist. It desires to see capitalist society 'destroyed' and replaced by a collectivist society, by the expropriation of the individual owners of the means of production. This expropriation is to be effected, not by paying compensation in the strict sense of the term, but by allotting to the expropriated owners an allowance to be determined by the community. Thus the Society is not revolutionary in the sense in which this term is traditionally employed in France ; it does not look for the social transformation to be brought about suddenly by a successful insurrection. It is evolutionary in method though revolutionary in aim. For the attainment of this aim the Society relies upon the spread of Socialist ideas, and endeavours to secure the greatest possible dissemination of a knowledge of the relationships between the individual and society in its threefold aspect, economic, moral, and political.

The Fabian policy is extremely original and extremely peculiar. It could furnish good results only in a country where political development and

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political education are greatly advanced, in a country *whose social evolution is characterized by the fact that it is more ready than any other country in the world to accept and to realize Socialist conceptions.* The pre-eminence of England in this respect was pointed out by the present writer as long ago as 1896.

Little concerned as to the number of its members, but most particular about their intellectual and moral quality, the Fabian Society endeavours to induce the British people to democratize its political and to socialize its economic institutions. With this end in view, it endeavours by every means in its power to influence all the political parties. It gives its support to any candidate, whatever his professed individual views, who is willing to work on behalf of reforms tending towards democracy and towards Socialism. The tactics of the Society are essentially reformist, for it considers every reform, however trifling in itself, to be a step forward in the indefinite march of progress. It is the duty of Fabians to be incessant propagandists, and such in fact they are in speech and writing, endeavouring to secure the dissemination of Socialist criticism and Socialist ideas in the press, in fiction, in poetry, in the drama, in literary and scientific essays, in all elected bodies (parliament, county councils, and town councils), in political

and economic groups—in a word, everywhere. This slow and unceasing process of permeation imperceptibly induces a Socialist mentality in the bourgeois and in the proletarian world. I mean by this a mentality which is permeated with Socialist ideas. The outcome is that insensibly reforms come to be made in the Socialist direction, and that these reforms increase always in extent and importance and will continue to increase in the future. Each one of these reforms constitutes so much definite advance towards the final goal of Socialism.

The Socialism advocated by the Fabian Society is State Socialism, for we are told in the Fabian programme that the existing democratic political system of England renders impossible the opposition that exists upon the Continent between the State and the people. Hence the State Socialism of the Fabians is altogether different from the State Socialism of Germany. It is far less centralized, and tends increasingly towards decentralization, leaving a large measure of autonomy to the elements out of which the State is built up—individuals, municipalities, and counties. In a word, the Fabian Society desires to establish a kind of free co-operative commonwealth. The Fabians claim to be the defenders of scientific Socialism, but they use this term in a different sense from that in which it is employed by the Social Democrats.

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Although, in fact, they are experts in the exposition of historical materialism, or rather of the economic basis of history, they reject the idea of the class struggle, and refuse to accept Marx's theory of value. The first work of Bernard Shaw to be translated into French was his remarkable essay on *The Illusions of Socialism*." This was published in 1900 in "L'Humanité Nouvelle." Here Shaw tells us: "Karl Marx is no more infallible than Aristotle or Bacon, than Ricardo or Buckle. Like them, he made mistakes which are now plain to every undergraduate." In his attacks on Marx's theory of surplus value, Bernard Shaw bases his argument on the writings of the distinguished economist Stanley Jevons. So little is Shaw a Marxist that he says somewhere that *Capital* may be described simply as a jeremiad against the bourgeoisie.

As regards journalistic collaboration, the Fabians make no distinction between the capitalist press and the press that is called Socialist. The larger the circulation of a paper the greater pleasure it gives them to write for it, for it conveys their ideas to a larger number of individuals. This view, which differs very strongly from that held by the exclusive and sectarian Social Democrats, gave rise to some amusing incidents in Germany in 1906. Bernard Shaw was one of the foreign leader-writers of "Vorwaerts," the official organ of the German



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Socialist Party. An article sent in by him having been refused, he published it in a capitalist paper, the "Berliner Tagblatt," if I remember aright. This publication in a bourgeois journal by a Socialist of an article which had been refused by a Socialist journal owing to its lack of Marxist orthodoxy gave rise to a public controversy which was exceedingly amusing because Shaw himself took part in it, contributing some brilliant letters on the subject to the "Sozialistische Monatshefte," the organ of the Reformists of Bernstein's school.

The principal means employed by the Fabians for the diffusion of their ideas is the pamphlet. They have published nearly two hundred pamphlets by various authors, among whom may be mentioned Sidney Webb, Sydney Olivier, Graham Wallas, the Rev. Stuart Headlam, and, above all, Bernard Shaw.

Among Shaw's pamphlets we may give the first place to *The Impossibilities of Anarchism*, in which he refutes in a dry and lucid style the theories of Anarchist Communism, for he has no belief in the infinite goodness of his fellow-creatures. His refutation bears only on Kropotkin's conception of Anarchism. Shaw takes the view—which the present writer has shown to be erroneous in his work on *Socialisme et Anarchisme*—that Anarchy or Anarchism means "without organiza-

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tion." What the term really implies is "without authority, without government." When we come to study the philosophy and the ethics which find a clear expression in the plays of Bernard Shaw, we shall be amused to find that he is himself an enemy of authority, which he combats in whatever form it may be displayed. Like the majority of reflective Socialists, Shaw is an extreme individualist. For, in fact, it is only through the realization of Socialism that the human individuality will be enabled to develop freely, to blossom fully forth in all its capacities and all its energies. Only when Socialism is realized will it be possible for the thinker or the artist to be truly himself and to give to the world all that is in him. It is for this reason that artists and thinkers, rebels as they are by nature, the most fully awakened, the most original, and the most forceful of their kind (and to these belongs Shaw), are commonly Socialists, and especially liberty-loving or anarchizing Socialists. Full of vitality, they love living ideas—the ideas of the future. Their vision is turned forwards, and not backwards. They are Utopians, for Utopia is the reality of to-morrow. The artist or the thinker who wishes to revive the things of the past, or who desires to preserve what exists and to resist innovations, whether it be in the sphere of art, politics, or economics, is beaten

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from the start. He turns his face towards the dead, because he himself is as a dead man moving among the living. We must leave the dead to the dead, and go forward to life—to life which is always good, always great, always worth living, despite its harshness, its cruelty, its pettiness, and its weakness.

Whenever the Fabian Society wishes to issue a manifesto it makes use of the pen of Bernard Shaw. Thus, in 1901, he wrote *Fabianism and the Empire*, expressing the Society's views on military service, colonial policy, free trade, the housing of the working classes, national pensions, etc.

Owing to the dominant influence of Bernard Shaw the Fabian Society is essentially realist. Accepting what exists, it makes it its business to study the immediately practicable measures to effect a change in what exists by ameliorating the life of the workers and favouring the well-being of the community. In the Fabian manifesto which has just been mentioned, signed by Bernard Shaw, we find him demanding for South Africa measures which were subsequently adopted by the British Government in 1902 and 1906. Nothing can show better than this how extensive has been the influence of the Fabian Society upon the country's domestic and foreign policy. It is hardly necessary to recall, in addition, the enormous extension

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that has of late years been effected in the domain of municipal enterprise, whereby the supplies of water, gas, and electricity have been made a Local Government concern. This method of communal activity is enthusiastically advocated by Bernard Shaw in his little volume *The Common Sense of Municipal Trading* (1904). The municipalization of public services is one of the primary demands of the Fabian Society; another is the Eight Hours Day, regarded as the maximum working day, and on this latter subject should be read Shaw's pamphlet *An Eight Hours Working Day*. We may refer also to his *Socialism for Millionaires*, containing good-humoured mockery of the rich man who is incapable of enjoying his wealth and of making a graceful use of it. Another manifesto of the Society, *Fabianism and the Fiscal Question*, is from the same prolific pen.

In a note recently sent to the present writer Bernard Shaw summarized in the following terms the past and future work of the Fabian Society :—

“ 1. To get rid of the old notion that the Socialist Societies (containing twenty members apiece!) will be able to regenerate the world by merely enlarging the circle of their membership; and to replace it by the notion that it is, on the contrary, the business of Socialists to join all other

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kinds of organization in order to permeate these with Socialist ideas and to suggest Socialist solutions for their difficulties. This has been termed the Policy of Permeation; and from 1884 to 1892 it was an astonishing novelty for Socialists, who were at that time all split up into little sects, like the Christian sects, each sect expecting all the world to enter its own little Bethel.

“ 2. To reduce Socialism to a series of parliamentary measures making up a constitutional policy (Collectivism), so that a respectable Englishman may just as readily be a Socialist as a Conservative or a Liberal.

“ 3. To detach the working classes from the Liberal Party and to form a parliamentary Labour Party.

“ All this has been done.

“ There still remains—

“ 4. To detach the Socialists from the Labour Party, which is not a Socialist Party but a Radical wing of the Trade Unions. The Labour Party is good in that it represents labour, but bad in that it represents poverty and ignorance, and it is anti-Social in that it supports the producer against the consumer and the worker against the employer instead of supporting the workers against the idlers. The Labour Party is also bad on account of its false democracy, which substitutes the mis-

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trust, fear, and political incapacity of the masses for genuine political talent, and which would make the people legislators instead of leaving them what they are at present, the judges of legislators.

“ 5. To constitute in Parliament a Socialist Party independent of all the other political parties, using its ideas and its political science to give a lead to the advanced elements of all these other parties.”

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We see that Bernard Shaw's part in the Fabian Society has been and is extremely important. Probably no other man has had so great an influence as he upon this Society, which in its turn has exercised enormous influence in the universities, among the working classes, and also in fashionable circles. With the possible exception of Keir Hardie, Shaw's reaction upon British Socialism has been greater than that of any other man, much greater than that of Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democrats. Shaw has given himself without stint to Socialist propaganda. He is not satisfied with writing pamphlets, but gives innumerable lectures and addresses, indoor and outdoor. His Socialist work has always been unpaid, as indeed is that of the great majority of the men and women who work for Socialism

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throughout the world. So much does he delight in the propagandist rôle that he never misses an opportunity of expressing Socialist ideas. In 1909, for example, when the question of Old Age Pensions came to the front in England, it was announced in the "Westminster Gazette" that, to avoid disorganizing British finance, the Government intended that pensions should not be universal, but should be allotted only to the destitute. Bernard Shaw immediately took up his pen to reply, and the following day there appeared in the "Westminster Gazette" the sensational article in which he predicted the ruin of the Liberal Party if it adopted this plan of limiting pensions to the necessitous. All had a right to the pension. "To find the necessary funds there are but two ways open: either an increase of import duties, or else an attack on our manufacturing and commercial classes which will force them to disgorge a little more of the money they have stolen, taking from them by a new income-tax an additional part of that wealth which a really wise administration would never have allowed them to accumulate." Bernard Shaw, of course, advocated the latter method.

Meanwhile he had held the office of borough councillor for Paddington, devoting himself ably and conscientiously—as he always does when he

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puts his hand to anything—to questions of paving, lighting, sewerage, and water supply.

In the year 1896 was held in London the International Socialist Congress, to which the present writer has devoted a volume, *Le Socialisme et le Congrès de Londres*. Bernard Shaw attended this Congress as delegate of a small Dublin branch, at that time the only Socialist group in Ireland. He did not then possess the wide fame which is his to-day, but he was already a well-known character, both as critic and as Socialist. I can still picture him in my mind when, as the sequel of the memorable intervention by the French section which split the Congress into two warring factions, he rose from his place in the midst of the tumult as the session came to a close, crying out, "I demand the right of constituting an Irish national section!" I can still hear him saying as he left the hall, "They are all mad—hopelessly mad!"

I believe that this International Congress was the last at which Shaw was present. At the international sittings of the Congress of London, except for a few witty and ironical interruptions made in the vain attempt to call the Social-Democrats to their senses, Bernard Shaw did not speak. In the English section, however, he was, with Keir Hardie, the defender of liberty, in opposition to



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Hyndman, the advocate of social democratic autocracy. In this way he contributed towards the victory of the French trade unionists, who, under the leadership of Fernand Pelloutier and myself, supported by the Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire (commonly known as the Allemanistes), were then in conflict with the French and German Social-Democracy.

The Congress of London marks the climax of power attained by the German Social-Democracy. From this time, thanks to the understanding between France and England, there began a decline in its influence, eventuating in its defeat in 1907 at the Congress of Stuttgart. Since then the leadership of the Socialist world belongs to France and to Great Britain, to the Western peoples whose political evolution is farthest advanced, to the two in which the Socialist spirit is most intensely developed. This logical and rational result is the outcome of the influence, oftentimes unconsciously exercised and unconsciously submitted to, and at first always slow and unseen, exerted upon numerous Socialists by the English policy and the English spirit, and, above all, exerted by the Fabian Society, in which the leading force has been Bernard Shaw.

Is it not to English, and especially to Fabian, influence that Bernstein owes the Reformism which

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he has so brilliantly championed in Germany—not a petty bourgeois and self-sufficient Reformism, but Reformism as conceived by the Fabian Society? Nay, more. Any one who studies the genesis of contemporary French Syndicalism will discover a British factor in this social phenomenon as well. One of the founders of French Syndicalism was Emile Pouget, who was directly subjected to English influences during a long residence in London. Another of its founders, and perhaps the most influential, was Fernand Pelloutier, likewise inspired by the remarkable Fabian Socialist policy. It suffices, indeed, to glance at the declaration unanimously voted by the French Socialist Party at the Congress of Toulouse to recognize as an incontestable fact that French Socialism now partly follows the lines of the Fabian policy. The wording of this resolution as concerns the question of reforms and as concerns the organization of the workers in trade unions and co-operative societies seems to be almost pure Fabianism. I say almost, for naturally where we have to do with different mentalities and a different national environment ideas must undergo a certain transformation. It must not be supposed from what I have just said that it is my contention that the French Socialist movement is simply a product of British tendencies and British Socialist policy. All that I mean

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to imply is that a knowledge of the English Socialist movement, with its special mentality and its peculiar tendencies, has been one of the factors which has switched the movement of the French proletariat towards Syndicalism and Reformism, just as it has been one of the factors in the evolution of the German Social-Democracy.

We must not forget that in the universal process of life all things are interconnected, that everything is at the same time cause and effect. All things that happen are so inextricably interlaced that it is a difficult matter to determine the importance of each individual factor of social evolution. Without wishing, therefore, to class such factors in a serial order of importance, we may say that in the evolution of Socialism the influence of economic phenomena has been greater than the influence of ideal concepts, whether these were the ideas of the France of former days, the Germany of yesterday, or of the England and of the France of to-day.

Bearing on what has just been said, I may draw attention to the participation by Bernard Shaw, in April 1912, in a meeting held in London in favour of the Syndicalists, Guy Bowman, Buck, and Tom Mann, who were prosecuted for having suggested to soldiers that they should refuse to fire upon their brother workers on strike. At this huge

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meeting Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, Lansbury, and Bernard Shaw were the principal speakers. With his usual unfailing wit Shaw brilliantly supported the right of free speech.

“The Prime Minister recently made an extraordinary statement. When the Minimum Wage Bill was under discussion he declared that it was impossible for Parliament to establish the actual rates, and that all that could be done was to agree to a declaration of principle. This is a grave innovation. Again and again in the past Parliament has established rates of minimum wage. It has laid down the minimum wage of judges and the minimum wage of M.P.'s; before long it will have to vote the minimum wage of the King, to vote the Civil List. Will Mr. Asquith rise in the House saying that the Government can no longer do what it has done in previous years, that it cannot establish rates, but must merely record its assent to the general principle of the Civil List?

“Is the King not to know whether he will get £5 or £500,000? What would be the result? Let us suppose the King went on strike—I see that you are all delighted at the prospect! What would my position be? If I were to beg the soldiers not to fire upon their fellow-worker on strike, I should be sentenced to penal servitude for life. If, on the other hand, I were to tell

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the soldiers to fire upon him, I should be executed on Tower Hill for High Treason. Such are the dilemmas to which we are all exposed when our rulers begin to play with the law."

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN—(continued)

CONSIDERABLE space has been devoted to Bernard Shaw's connexion with the Socialist movement, for the dissemination of Socialist ideas is the man's life, his passion. Above all things he is a Socialist propagandist, an active member of the Fabian Society, which is a part of the Socialist International.

Shaw is a Socialist to the marrow of his bones, so much a Socialist that when he married in 1898 he married another Socialist. He tells us that when he married Charlotte Frances Payne Townshend he married for money; but we need not believe this, and we must answer him as his wife answers him, as Anne speaks of John Tanner in *Man and Superman*, "Go on talking—you talk so well!"

Socialist propaganda is to Shaw the aim of his life, and he regards his plays as merely one means of propaganda. The theatre is a pulpit from which he can address the public. Art is to him no more

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than a way of expressing thoughts, to render them more apt to penetrate people's minds.

This is the explanation of the plethora of ideas his plays contain. From 1892 to 1896 he wrote the seven plays which were published in 1898 in the two volumes entitled *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*. The first volume, *Unpleasant Plays*, contains *Widowers' Houses*, *The Philanderer*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; the second volume, *Pleasant Plays*, *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *You Never Can Tell*. They were played in out-of-the-way theatres, and all had a very short run. But Shaw is a man of extraordinary perseverance, and for him it was all the easier to wait because he was profoundly convinced of the value of his own work, of his genius indeed, and he knew the worth of his plays. He waited, therefore, and while waiting he published (in 1901) another volume, *Three Plays for Puritans*. This contains *The Devil's Disciple*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. They found a reading public, but no audience, so little were they played. Siegfried Trebitsch, however, a Viennese novelist and playwright, acting on the advice of William Archer, read Shaw's plays and admired them. He translated three into German: *The Devil's Disciple*, produced in Vienna at the Raimund Theatre, February 25, 1903; *The Man*

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*of Destiny*, first played at Frankfort-on-the-Main, April 21, 1903; and *Candida*, staged at Dresden, November 19, 1903. All were successful.

Consequently in the spring of 1904 the two plays last mentioned were produced in Berlin, the leading parts being taken by two distinguished actors, Agnes Sorma and Max Reinhardt. Leading critics, among them Georg Brandes and Hermann Bahr, acclaimed Shaw as a writer of genius, and the public became enthusiastic about his plays. They soon formed part of the repertory of the leading theatres of Vienna and Berlin. The success of *Arms and the Man* was enormous; that of *Cæsar and Cleopatra* was less striking, but still considerable. Shaw was now launched in the Teutonic world, and before long his plays were produced also in Polish and Scandinavian theatres, receiving here the same warm welcome. The London stage, however, was still closed to him. Nevertheless, in 1903 he published *Man and Superman*, with its supplements, *The Revolutionist's Handbook* and *Maxims for Revolutionists*. This work was widely read.

But a change was about to come over the English-speaking world. For twelve years he had been writing plays, and as a dramatist had remained almost unknown in his own country. The United States was to force his recognition upon England.



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In New York and other cities in the States the theatrical season of 1903-4 was a veritable triumph for the plays of Bernard Shaw. The bills of *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *You Never Can Tell* were never taken down at the theatre of Arnold Daly, a talented young actor ; and Richard Mansfield's interpretation of *Arms and the Man* was a brilliant success. These pieces were still drawing crowds when Forbes-Robertson toured the Eastern States with *Man and Superman*, receiving ovations in all the large towns.

In view of Shaw's success in America and in Germany it became necessary to produce his plays in London, and when one of his admirers, Granville Barker, a fellow-member of the Fabian Society, actor, author, joint-manager with Vedrenne of the Court Theatre, produced *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *You Never Can Tell*, the public came and came again, not an ordinary theatre audience, however, but a select and literate public. Shaw's plays began to coin money. It was astounding, but it was a fact ; and they were to continue to coin more and more. In the season 1904-5 his success was still plainer with *Man and Superman*, and finally became altogether undeniable with the production of *John Bull's Other Island*. Shaw's genius and perseverance were thus rewarded after he had waited for twelve years. That fashionable

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society which he scourges in his plays simply by showing what it really is was the artisan of his triumph. *Major Barbara* was the principal success of the season 1905-6.

Whilst the Court Theatre presented play after play by Bernard Shaw, almost all being produced except *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, whose production was prohibited by the ridiculous censorship, and while all were well received, on the Continent of Europe, in the Teutonic and Scandinavian worlds, and subsequently among the Slavonic nations, the success of his works was uninterrupted.

His plays were translated into Swedish, Danish, German, Magyar, Polish, Russian, Dutch. They were produced, they are still being produced, in Copenhagen, Stockholm, Christiania, Helsingfors, Amsterdam, Buda-Pesth, Warsaw, Cracow, Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Petrograd, Dresden. Everywhere in these Teutonic, Scandinavian, and Slavonic lands, wherever there is a literary environment, Shaw is part of the dramatic repertory. Whenever a theatrical manager has produced an unsuccessful play and funds are running low, he presents one of Bernard Shaw's works, and is sure that he will fill his house. Thus all the plays have on the Continent become true classics, even the one that has never been produced in England, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Both in Berlin and in Petrograd this

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play ran for more than a hundred consecutive nights.

As late as 1907, in France and in Belgium Bernard Shaw was barely known as sociologist and Socialist propagandist, and was altogether unknown as dramatist. Even to the best informed, with rare exceptions, he was a mere name until *Candida* was played at the Théâtre du Parc in Brussels in February 1907.

Whilst the literary matinée public was applauding *Candida* at the Brussels theatre, and while most of the critics were praising the play (an unusual experience in Shaw's case), the Court Theatre in London produced *The Doctor's Dilemma*, which was also extremely successful. At this time the Court Theatre was really living upon Shaw, for here Vedrenne and Barker produced also *Widowers' Houses* and *The Philanderer*. They even played, under the title of *Don Juan in Hell*, the third act of *Man and Superman* which is found in the printed play, but which is always cut from the representation of the piece. This, too, was a striking success, and so was *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, now staged for the first time in England, seven years after its publication, the part of Cæsar being played by Forbes-Robertson.

At the present date the plays of Bernard Shaw number twenty-seven, six of which are one-act

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plays. Most of the others are in three or four acts. The last of his plays to be staged in London, early in 1914, was *Pygmalion*, at His Majesty's Theatre, and here it had the same success as the year before in Berlin, Vienna, Munich, and Stockholm. All his plays have been presented on the stage throughout the Scandinavian and Teutonic world, and the majority of them in the Slavonic world as well. Three only as yet are known to the French-speaking world: *Candida*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and *You Never Can Tell*. There has been a single representation in Paris of the *Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*, this having been undertaken by a private society. Le Petit Théâtre Anglais of Paris has also staged in English *How He Lied to Her Husband* and *Music Cure*. In Italy, in 1908, the productions of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Arms and the Man* were comparative failures. Subsequently a distinguished Italian actress, Grammatica, undertook to interpret the works of Shaw, presenting *Candida*, *You Never Can Tell*, *How He Lied to Her Husband*, etc., and these performances drew large audiences. It may, in fact, be said that the only countries in Europe in which Shaw remains but little known to the theatre-going public are France, Spain, and Portugal.

The full list of the plays hitherto published is as follows: *Widowers' Houses*; *The Philanderer*;

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*Mrs. Warren's Profession; Arms and the Man; The Man of Destiny; Candida; You Never Can Tell; The Devil's Disciple; Cæsar and Cleopatra; Captain Brassbound's Conversion; Man and Superman; John Bull's Other Island; How He Lied to Her Husband; Major Barbara; The Doctor's Dilemma; The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet; Getting Married; Misalliance; Press Cuttings; Fanny's First Play; The Admirable Bashville; Passion, Poison, Petrification; Androcles and the Lion; Overruled; The Great Catherine; Pygmalion; Music Cure.*

There can be no doubt that the thinking portion of the French public, those in France who love literature, will in the end give to Shaw as much appreciation as he received in England after twelve years of apparent failure. Some day the French will take to their hearts the plays of one who is a true dramatic genius, the least typically English of all the geniuses Great Britain has ever produced. It is merely a question of time. Shaw and the Shavians are patient. Sure of what must happen, they await its coming in tranquil confidence.

\* \* \* \* \*

A rapid sketch has now been given of Bernard Shaw's life. The reader has seen the energy and mastery he displayed as journalist, musical and dramatic critic, sociologist, Socialist propagandist,

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lecturer, and open-air speaker. In the following pages we shall learn how alike in technique and in ideas is he a master of the drama, to what heights he rises as a philosopher and a moralist. But before we consider his dramatic method, a little must be said of the man himself, of his physical and mental characteristics, of his mode of life.

Bernard Shaw, who is now nearly sixty years of age, is tall, slender, and lively in his movements. Twenty years ago, when I first made his acquaintance at the house of a mutual friend, a member of the Fabian Society, Shaw's pointed beard and his hair, parted in the middle, were of a light red colour. His deep-set eyes were blue, clear, and merry, sometimes glinting like steel when he fixed his gaze upon you and seemed to search the bottom of your soul; his forehead was wide, lofty, straight; he had an almost persistent, sardonic smile; all this combined to give him a singularly mephistophelian expression. His face was pale, and since then has paled yet more, while his beard has become grey, softening the irony of his expression. His hand is long, with taper fingers, rather small for a man of his height.

In 1894 Shaw was no longer extremely poor; he was earning his own living by his pen, and the proceeds of his critical work enabled him to live

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very comfortably, with his mother. No longer, therefore, was he clad in the style described in the last chapter, but he was not dressed quite like an ordinary bourgeois. In common with all the Socialist intellectuals and with all the young men of the literary and artistic world, he had been influenced by William Morris, who, in conjunction with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Burne Jones, and Walter Crane, initiated an artistic revival in England—art applied equally to house decoration and to personal costume. He dressed, therefore, with an eye at once to comfort, hygiene, and artistic considerations, as did his friends and rivals in Socialism and literature. He wore a soft shirt, unstarched, saying, “I prefer this to a white breast-plate covered with a filthy layer of glazed starch.”

His necktie was usually of a soft green, brown, or red. He wore a suit of brown tweeds of loose and easy cut, harmonizing in tint with his shirt and necktie, with his broad-brimmed soft felt hat, also brown, and with his brown boots with massive soles, intended, he tells us, not for mountaineering, but “for the hard floors of the London galleries” and for the London pavements, since he was a great walker. Such was his appearance in 1894, and when I next met him two years later there was very little change. As fortune came to him he indeed accentuated the æsthetic originality and

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comfort of his clothing. In 1906, when he visited Paris to sit to Rodin for his bust, he wore a fine-spun golden brown suit. With his soft cream-coloured shirt and his dull-green tie, the effect was that of a symphony in brown, forming an artistic and agreeable contrast to the pallor of his face and the grizzled red of his hair and beard. Such is the dress Bernard Shaw almost always wears; but yielding to the English fashion, he dons in the evening clothes of a different colour, though of similar cut. Very rarely indeed does he wear evening-dress. To induce him to do this, he must himself be the guest of the evening. In September, 1911, when he visited me at Port Blanc in Brittany, Bernard Shaw related to me the following anecdote: "In 1910, Lord Haldane, the Minister of War, asked me to dinner, saying, 'You quite understand, we shall none of us wear evening dress.' I thought this rather a nuisance, for I had no black coat and had to order one specially. In the evening I turned up to dinner in my black coat, and in the lift I met some of the other guests who were in swallow-tails. 'If I had known,' I said to myself, 'I also would have come in a swallow-tail, and I should not have had to waste time in going to see my tailor.' And just imagine, Hamon, when we sat down to dinner every one except myself was in full evening dress. Haldane had told



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me this story because he himself believed the legend that I never wear evening dress."

In the country Shaw wears a Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers, the traditional dress of the English sportsman. This costume is extremely practical for walking and for cycling, of which he is very fond and does a great deal, for his constitution is robust, and this forces him, he says, to expend a certain amount of energy, "in order to avoid becoming a human pig." Since he attained to wealth he has had a motor-car, and this leads him to neglect the bicycle. He is also a great swimmer, but he has no love of shooting, nor of horse-racing, nor of fishing, nor, in a word, of any sport in which people kill, wound, or hurt living things as a means of recreation.

It is not on sentimental grounds but for reasons of hygiene that he is a vegetarian. For the same reason he is a teetotaller and drinks neither tea nor coffee. In 1908, when interviewed as to his regimen and as to its effect upon his health, he replied in his habitual vein of humour:—

"My health is not particularly good, because I am always overworked. In fact, I am hardly ten times as well as the average meat-eater. Do I find it a privation to do without meat and alcohol? Privation is a thing I know nothing about. Far from being an ascetic, I am one who seeks the

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joy of life. You might just as well ask me if I find it difficult to refrain from drinking petrol, which would really be less distasteful to me than brandy. The quality of my work depends upon the possession of an extremely refined critical spirit, and it would at once fall off did anything occur to make me easily satisfied with myself. Instead of following up and recording upon paper something like two per cent. of the ideas that come into my head upon any subject, I should, were I to work under the comforting influence of a narcotic encouraging me to self-indulgence, perhaps preserve ten per cent. or even more. (Let me beg you to note that alcohol is a narcotic and not a true stimulant.) The ordinary writer, the habitual consumer of alcohol, must transcribe, I should imagine, eighty per cent. of his ideas. Many journalists, under the combined influence of beer, whisky, tobacco, and beefsteak and onions, would appear to place on record more than cent. per cent. This explains the extraordinary difference between the literature and the journalism which I myself produce, and the ordinary commercial article. . . . A vegetarian diet is an aid towards the maintenance of an equable disposition, and contributes towards that good temper which is of the essence of life. The reason why most people are so easily disturbed is because they spoil their tempers by the con-

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sumption of wine and spirits, oysters, beefsteak, and beer."

Shaw is an enemy of tobacco, regarding it as a disgusting habit to pollute the air with smoke.

It is to his vegetarian diet and to his strict and enduring abstinence that Shaw attributes his equable temper, a temper that nothing can disturb. Although passionate by nature, as are Irishmen in general, he is of an astonishing placidity. He gets neither annoyed nor angry, he laughs, and thus laughing he tells the truth to his partner or to his opponent, nothing but the truth, which he utters bluntly but wittily. The honey of his wit softens the bitterness of his plain-speaking to such an extent that it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to lose one's temper with him. His wit is spontaneous, unlaboured, whether he is writing, speaking in public, or engaged in private conversation. A thousand anecdotes might be quoted to illustrate the caustic and unpremeditated quality of his sallies. Let us give the first that comes to mind.

One evening, at the first-night performance of one of his plays, brilliantly successful, a single member of the audience was hissing conscientiously, in active dissent from the enthusiastic applause of the whole theatre, applause which called the author before the curtain. The dissentient seized his opportunity to hiss louder than ever, and Bernard

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Shaw thereupon leaned towards him and the two exchanged the following dialogue :—

“ You think my play a bad one ? ”

“ Detestable ! ”

“ I am quite of your opinion, but what can we two do against the whole of this audience ? ”

His wit bubbles up unceasingly, without effort. He cannot speak of any subject, however serious, without presenting it amusingly transformed by his cold and caustic irony. Another example may be given in illustration.

The late W. T. Stead once conceived the idea of an international pilgrimage to the Hague, as an organized manifestation on behalf of peace. Every nation was to be represented by some of its most distinguished personalities. Bernard Shaw, as the most eminent living English playwright, was naturally invited, but refused the invitation in the following terms :—

“ MY DEAR STEAD,—

No one has ever made me so absurd a proposal before. We are a very small number of persons of international importance whose time is extremely valuable and who are all overworked. But you have at your disposal plenty of people whose importance is purely local, such as the kings and other heads of the State. Their time is of far

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less value, and it is their profession to take part in national and international manifestations. Your pilgrims should be drawn from their ranks. If your plan is carried out, I shall be delighted if you will bring any king you fancy to see me, and I will give him all the hints he may need."

This continuous flow of wit hardly ever palls. When his correspondence comes to be published, his letters, not excepting those dealing with simple matters of business, will be found to constitute an inexhaustible source, not of mere light jests, such as have no permanent value, but of profound thoughts, just observations, and truths both trite and exceptional, all so aptly expressed that the most morose of men or the most captious of women will be unable to read them without smiling, and from time to time laughing as frankly as a child.

Wit is the essential quality of all his writings, of his novels, plays, criticisms, and letters, and also of his lectures and conversation. During the thirty years and more in which he has been to the front as Socialist and feminist agitator and as *littérateur* the lectures he has given may be numbered by the thousand. An imperturbable speaker, incisive, caustic, and logical, he intersperses his discourse with amusing anecdotes and truths, paradoxically expressed. He speaks with

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extreme volubility—we must not forget that he is an Irishman—but with such assurance that he never finds it necessary to break the thread of what he is saying or to remodel his phrases. He is never rhetorical and never sentimental, confining himself to facts and to logical deductions. Interruptions are a delight to him, for he is a man of instant and apt repartee, moving his audience to laughter, and thus conquering them; yet he continually shocks his hearers, and does so deliberately, in order, he tells us, to make them think by shaking them out of their torpor. It is thus his pleasure to bring to life among his auditors the true man or woman, instead of the marionette or the doll into which most people are transformed by our worldly conventions.

He cannot fail to shock his listeners, for he shows them the naked truth, without the conventional make-up, stripped of the clothing of illusion; he exposes the facts as they are, as he sees them with his normal vision. Being a truth-teller after this fashion, he is a cynic in the philosophical sense of the term, for he has a scorn of social conventions, and loves to make a mock of them. As he himself puts it: "I have a conscience, and conscience is always anxiously explanatory. . . . It annoys me to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable, and I insist on making

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them think in order to bring them to a conviction of sin."

In private Bernard Shaw is no less amusing and voluble than on the platform. A wonderful talker, he knows none the less how to listen, a quality rare in good talkers. His conversation charms especially by its refined satire and its unexpected sallies, revealing an astounding imagination, which is manifested also by his plays, his novels, and his critical plays. A smile is ever on his lip; but if the conversation turns upon the exploitation of the weak by the strong, upon some act of injustice, some social crime, his voice becomes severe, his eye flashes, and his irony becomes more biting than ever. Bernard Shaw speaks on every subject with the same assurance, and this is not the assurance of the ignorant man, but that of one who knows. He does, indeed, know a very great deal, his culture being extremely broad. Further, he possesses the rare quality of having an original view on everything that comes up for discussion, new, if not in substance, at least in form, and from this it results that even the substance often seems new. So individual a manner of looking at everything, the manifestation of a rich imagination, is a quality I have encountered in one other man only, a Scotsman, Professor Patrick Geddes. This incomparable richness of

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imagination, displaying itself from moment to moment by amusing anecdotes and strange comparisons, is, as we shall see later, one of the characteristics of his dramatic art. As dramatist, moreover, his dialogue is distinguished by a keen intensity of life and by an astonishing realism; and the language he here employs, more colloquial than the written language, exhibits a freshness and vigour which compel admiration. Altogether different is the language of his lengthy stage directions and of his still lengthier Prefaces. In a Preface-writing competition Shaw could give points to Beaumarchais and to Alexandre Dumas *filis*. Here his style is elegant, perhaps unduly ornate, and his sentences are long, over-long; and this characteristic, in conjunction with the nature of his humour, renders translation difficult if one wishes to reproduce in another tongue all the charm and all the wit of the original English. In his dramatic work, as in all his life, Shaw is essentially realist. He makes his characters speak the strict truth, just as he always speaks it himself. At first this astonishes and alarms, but soon it becomes attractive and pleasing. He thus makes us see people as they really are, when stripped of their conventional and romantic trappings.

In social life the man's uncompromising realism sometimes induces a sense of churlishness, leading



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him to be regarded as one who deliberately flouts the conventions, although the pleasing manner in which his truths are uttered softens their bitterness to some extent. Thus has become current the idea that Bernard Shaw is a disagreeable person to have anything to do with, and it is even believed that he is rude to his correspondents. Thus he wrote to me one day: "X, the manager of the Z theatre in Paris, has written to a common friend asking whether he might venture to apply to me for one of my plays without risking the receipt of an abusive letter in return."

This is pure fable—and how many fables have there not been disseminated about Bernard Shaw! The writer has known him personally for twenty years, his relationships with the dramatist have become intimate, and they have always remained charming and agreeable. Detesting as he does all worldly conventions, Shaw himself radiates ease to such an extent that he can hardly fail to induce the same condition of ease in those with whom he comes into contact. Pretenders, poseurs, worldly-minded people, the marionettes who are moved by the thousand threads of everyday conventional life, weary and disgust him. Thus he makes a point of tearing them to tatters in his plays, his conversation, and his letters. Of one such he wrote in a letter to myself: "I like him; he is the

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very man we need ; a man of elegance, a pretender to social position. He will teach us how to behave, will criticize our hats and our neckties, will be, in fact, a sort of moral valet."

To protect the weak, to defend them against the strong, is a passion with Bernard Shaw.

In this peculiarity of his disposition we find, I think, one of the reasons why he became a Socialist ; another reason was his profound conviction that Socialism is a powerful force for good. Yet it is not on sentimental grounds that he is a Socialist, but because he regards Socialism as a means for the practical realization of his ideas of life.

As we have seen, Shaw, like all artists, is an individualist. He does not concern himself about what others think, but about what he thinks himself. He is himself, and himself only. He realizes to the full the type of the true artist who, as Oscar Wilde puts it, "is a man who believes wholly in himself, for he is absolutely himself." It is through egoism that Shaw is an altruist. He desires the supreme development of the individual, so as to transform man into superman. Desiring the end, he desires the means—that is to say, the disappearance of all the shackles which prevent or retard our progress. Such shackles, in his view, are constituted by the false ideals imposed upon

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us by conventions, customs, and laws. He therefore frees himself as completely as possible from all these false and injurious ideals, and devotes his energies, his talents, and his genius to their destruction, for he is convinced that precisely in proportion as human society is enabled to throw off its chains will his own personal liberation be effected.

One of these chains is private property, and for this reason he advocates communal property, and has become a Socialist. Another chain is authority, and of authority therefore he is an irreconcilable enemy, attacking it in all its forms in every one of his plays. In actual fact he proclaims himself an Anarchist, even if he does not use the term. Thus it is not on vague sentimental grounds that he is a libertarian Socialist, but from personal interest, from a well-conceived egoism, which makes him recognize that in the most highly developed society, one which will provide all the highest possibilities of well-being, every individual member, and consequently he himself also, will be able to effect the fullest development of his ego.

He is not a sentimentalist, and has no wish to be one. If he is kindly, as he is to an extreme degree; if he is good-natured and considerate, it is through egoism. In addition to the pleasure he himself derives from the simple fact of helping

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the weak, such an action furnishes him with an even greater pleasure, in that he thereby assists in the realization of his Socialist and Anarchist ideal, and thus contributes towards his own enfranchisement. We may quote his own words in this connection :—

“ My life belongs to the community, and I find it a lifelong privilege to do everything I can for the community. When I come to die I want to have emptied myself completely, for the harder I work the more I live. I delight in life for its own sake, and am far from regarding it as a brief candle. It is a kind of splendid torch of which for the moment I happen to be the holder, and before I pass it on to future generations I want it to burn as brilliantly as possible.”

Bernard Shaw is now a wealthy man. His plays, performed all over the world, wherever English, German, and the Slavonic and Scandinavian tongues are spoken, bring him in a large income. Yet he lives quite simply. It is his desire that fortune should entangle him as little as possible in the bonds of worldly convention, for if this happened he would no longer enjoy life to the full. He does not wish his mind to become narrowed or his intelligence to be clogged, and he therefore remains the least worldly of men. Now that he is famous he is continually receiving invitations from people in good society—to employ a stereo-

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typed phrase. He rarely accepts. His refusal on one occasion gave rise to an amusing correspondence.

Lady Randolph Churchill invited him to luncheon, and he wrote in reply: "Certainly not, I will not come. What have I done to provoke such an attack upon my well-known habits?" Lady Randolph answered him in his own vein by telegram: "I know nothing about your habits, but I hope they are not quite so bad as your manners." Shaw, a trifle nettled, thereupon replied at length: "My dear lady, do be reasonable. What on earth am I to do? If I refuse an invitation in the conventional phrases, it is understood that I wish to break off all relations. If I make the customary excuses to the effect that I have a previous engagement, I shall receive another invitation, and perhaps when I have refused six times running my would-be hostess would come to the conclusion that I had taken a dislike to her. Of course there is the alternative of accepting. But in that case I should be horribly bored, and I should die of hunger. I should have no better opportunity of really seeing and talking to my hostess than if I were to meet her by chance at the Savoy Hotel. I should get nothing to eat, for I do not eat the corpses of animals or anything else that is likely to be offered to the other guests. Among these

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last, one-half will take the opportunity of inviting me to luncheons and dinners, while the other half, which will have already spread this net for me in vain, will take offence because I have accepted another's invitation after having refused their own. I shall have to dress respectably and to behave properly—two things which are altogether unnatural to me. For these reasons I act with perfect simplicity, and when you write, 'Come and take lunch with a lot of other people,' I answer plainly, 'I don't want to come.' If you were to suggest my doing something agreeable, I should answer just as plainly, 'I shall be very glad.' But it is not at all agreeable to me to come to luncheon with a lot of carnivores, of necrophagi. Besides, it breaks up my morning's work. I won't lunch with you, I won't dine with you, I won't call on you, I won't take the smallest part in your social routine, and I am only willing to know you at all under special and privileged conditions to the entire exclusion of the crowd for whose gratification you would serve me up. But if at any time whatsoever I can do you a real service, you have only to call upon me; that's what I exist for. No doubt you will reply, 'Thank you for nothing; you would say the same thing to every one.' That is perfectly true, but surely I have already gone far out of my way in writing at such length to a

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lady who has pestered me by an invitation to lunch."

Bernard Shaw's attitude towards the wealth he has now acquired is that not of an owner but merely of an administrator. He considers that his function in the matter is to make the best use he can of it in order to contribute towards the liberation of humanity from its bonds. One of these bonds, and a very powerful one, is the habit of lying. Shaw detests lies. His clear insight, his grasp of 'intimate motives, of the occult causes of human action—a faculty in which he is pre-eminent, and which is one reason for the beauty of his plays—enable him to detect a lie very easily, however much it may masquerade as truth. Having detected it, he lays it bare, to the great discomfort of the liar. It is possible that this practice of his of exposing lies on every possible occasion is one reason for Bernard Shaw's reputation of unsociability. Undoubtedly his brutal frankness makes many persons dislike him, although with the same frankness he also utters agreeable truths. His sense of justice is too keenly developed for him to fail to hold an equal balance between merits and defects. Indeed, nothing is more charming than the relations his friends may have with him if they act with frankness and sincerity and express their true opinions. In our present society, however, built

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up upon lying conventions, we rarely encounter persons who speak with perfect frankness, and it is amusing to note that those who do so speak are not believed.

Some find him antipathetic; but this is their own fault. Their antipathy for Bernard Shaw is in reality the outcome of their sympathy for everything which with good reason he considers bad, execrable, in need of change—from capitalist property to starched collars. I have read somewhere that Shaw does not like to be liked, but that he likes to be feared. This is true if we mean simply that Shaw's actions are not dictated by the desire to make people like him; but it is untrue to assert that he acts as he does in order to make people dislike him. Whether he is loved or hated is to him a matter of indifference. He pays no attention to what others feel about him. He acts as he does because he loves his fellows, not sentimentally but rationally, as the outcome of a well-conceived egoism.

In every country the attitude of the official critics towards the plays of Bernard Shaw has been, in general, merciless. Yet adverse criticism has never disturbed him, for it is one of his most characteristic traits to be delighted by things that would annoy other people. What the ordinary man regards as a reason for acceptance is by Shaw considered a



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reason for refusal, and conversely. He glories in that which would make the ordinary man feel ashamed. This is one of the ways in which his spirit of rebellion displays itself. For example, the general opinion condemns advertisement in all cases except where articles of commerce are concerned. Bernard Shaw finds in this a reason for advertising himself.

Being a keen observer, he is aware that "in England, as elsewhere, the spontaneous recognition of really original work begins with a mere handful of people, and propagates itself so slowly that it has become a commonplace to say that genius, demanding bread, is given a stone after its possessor's death—the remedy for this is sedulous advertisement. Accordingly, I have advertised myself so well that I find myself, whilst still in middle life, almost as legendary a person as the Flying Dutchman."

Never did there live a greater advertiser than Shaw. Wherever he could, and in every possible way, he proclaimed that he was a genius, and that the wares he had on offer were the best in the world, better than those of Shakespeare. He was his own Barnum; he puffed himself, and he continues to do so. Don't waste your breath by calling him a charlatan, for he will glory in the name.

It is certain that this unbridled advertisement,

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this deliberate and ceaseless blowing of his own trumpet, have notably contributed to Shaw's world-wide renown. It is perhaps thanks to his methods of advertisement that it took him but ten years to arrive. Now that he is famous he does not cease advertising himself, for he enjoys the practice all the more in proportion as it shocks public opinion. "Stop advertising myself!" he said the other day. "On the contrary, I must do it more than ever. Look at Pears' Soap. There is a solid house if you like, but every wall is still plastered with their advertisements. If I were to give up advertising, my business would immediately begin to fall off. You blame me for having declared myself to be the most remarkable man of my time. But the claim is an arguable one. Why should I not say it when I believe that it is true?"

It is this outrageous system of advertisement, in conjunction with the humorous fashion in which he presents his most serious ideas, which have prevented, and continue to prevent, people from taking him seriously. "He is a very clever man, his plays are extremely amusing, but he is neither serious nor sincere," say of him most of his countrymen. Others, somewhat less dogmatically, are content to ask themselves, "Is he in earnest?" or sometimes they actually put the question to himself, saying, "Are you really in earnest in all that you

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say, write, and do?" To which he replies: "If you believe me to be really in earnest you have no need of my assurance; if you do not think me in earnest it is quite useless for me to give you an assurance which you would not believe." The answer is witty and just, but ambiguous for those who do not know Shaw's work. His laugh is a bitter one; it is the laugh of Figaro making haste to laugh for fear lest he should be forced to weep. And the bitterness of this ironical lightness of heart shows that his continued laughter, his incessant jesting, are no more than the wrappings in which he deliberately conceals the bitterest of truths, most bitter often because they are the most commonplace.

The honeyed boldness of his farces enwraps a criticism in which Shaw is thoroughly in earnest, but owing to his mephistophelian laughter the public has really failed to understand the Shavian drama. Indeed, Shaw has good reason for saying, "If the British public had understood me, it would have forced me to drink the hemlock."

Shaw's sincerity is beyond dispute, and is obvious to any one who chooses to think. It is as propagandist that he assumes the jester's rôle. We saw this when we were discussing his Socialism. He does not write merely for the pleasure of writing, but also in order to teach others what he knows and sees. He explains himself in the following

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terms: "I am a reasonable, patient, consistent, apologetic, laborious person, with the temperament of a schoolmaster and the pursuits of a vestry-man."

He has the temperament of a schoolmaster! It is quite true, Shaw loves to instruct. By his criticism, by his novels, and by his plays, he desires to educate the public. It is not that he wishes to impose his own views, but that he wishes to make the public think for itself, and he is sure that the result of this will be that people will come to hold views much the same as his own. It is in consequence of this love of moralizing that Shaw is a realist, for he wishes to demonstrate what really is, to display what is hidden beneath the trappings of romanticism. It is owing to this love of moralizing that he has become a jester, in order to make his audience swallow in this form what would not have been tolerated if said in a serious way. He is a puritan in a fool's cap. His love of moralizing, unauthoritatively, makes him impartial and objective in his plays, and makes him hold the balance so justly between the characters he presents that he has often been reproached by the critics on the ground that it was impossible to see what he was driving at. It is perfectly true, we do not always know clearly to which characters in his plays he gives the preference, which are

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expressing the ideas he himself cherishes. The reason of this is that he aims at being just, at showing human beings as they really are, without detracting from one in order to exalt another.

This sense of justice which has presided over the creation of his plays, and which is the cause of his objectivity and impartiality, is unquestionably inborn, but it has certainly been fostered in addition by his fifteen years' work as a press critic. It is by deliberate desire that he endeavours to be just, and so strongly does he feel this need that his seal is a figure of justice. It is his passion for justice which leads him unceasingly to denounce law and authority as the cause of injustice. When he wishes to judge men and to expose them, he looks at the matter always from their point of view, never from his own. In his desire to be just he has been powerfully aided by his profound conviction of universal determinism. In his view, human beings are what they are, and they could not, in the given conditions, be other than we find them. For this reason he does not hate them nor despise them at all, but feels a certain amount of pity for them, and wishes not to crush them, but to exhibit them and to judge them justly.

Shaw's keen sense of justice renders it very pleasant to have business relations with him. In his desire for justice he is resolved to exploit no

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one, but also to be exploited by no one. He defends with equal firmness his own interests and those of the one with whom he is doing business, however much these respective interests may conflict. He is an extremely able man of business, and makes it a point of honour to be so. Although his time is so fully occupied, he keeps in personal touch with business matters in every country in which his plays are produced and in which his works are published. He employs no agent, contrary to the usual custom of British authors.

To sum up, Shaw is a man whose life and work are conducted in a thoroughly logical manner. He is the man of his writings. He has endeavoured to arrange his daily life as far as possible in accord with his philosophical ideas. As far as can be done in contemporary society he has realized the man of to-morrow, man as he will be in the Socialist society of to-morrow—that is to say, the real man, liberated from all social and worldly conventions, the free man acting freely, and producing, for the very reason that he is free, more and better than to-day. And it is because Shaw has realized to the utmost of his capacity this type of the man of the future, of him who appears a superman in relation to the man of to-day, that he seems disagreeable, antipathetic, unsociable, brutal, immoral, and insensitive, when he is in reality agreeable, sympathetic, sociable, gentle, moral, and sensitive.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS OF BERNARD SHAW'S DRAMATIC METHOD

THE first introduction to Shaw's work, either in book form or presented on the stage, is apt to induce pleasure, but pleasure intermingled with surprise, astonishment, and even shock. The general effect is one of moderate intellectual discomfort, and yet even this discomfort is not wholly displeasing.

The question naturally arises, What is the cause of this impression? We shall find the answer in a precise analysis of Bernard Shaw's dramatic method, to enable us to understand its technique, to ascertain its essence, its characteristics, how the action of the play is carried on, how the situations are brought about, how the climax is attained.

In the first place, the study of his work shows beyond dispute that its essence is comedy. There can be no doubt that the pleasurable impression produced by the plays is dependent upon this element of comedy, which always makes us smile,

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and often makes us laugh out loud. If we study the Shavian comedy in the light of the masterly analysis of laughter we owe to Bergson, we shall see without difficulty that Shaw employs many different ways of inducing amusement, but that he prefers the method which is regarded as the most lofty—that is to say, the comedy of ideas.

The comedy of incident in Shaw's plays takes various forms. To make us laugh he has recourse to an inversion of rôles. Thus we laugh when Philip and Dolly, in *You Never Can Tell*, give moral lectures to their mother; when the accused, Richard Dudgeon, gives a lesson to his judge, Major Swindon, in *The Devil's Disciple*; when Juggins, the valet, teaches good manners to his masters (*Fanny's First Play*); when Charteris of *The Philanderer* is hunted by Julia, or Tanner, in *Man and Superman*, by Ann. But in addition to these methods, to this comedy resulting from an inversion of rôles, we find a comedy which is the outcome of events and actions, giving us, indeed, the illusion of real life, and yet at the same time inducing the unmistakable sensation of a mechanical and automatic arrangement. In the fourth act of *You Never Can Tell*, in a scene between Catharine and Bluntschli in *Arms and the Man*, in *How he Lied to her Husband*, in *The Man of Destiny*, and in others of the plays, we



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encounter this type of comedy. The reversal of rôles which is the natural outcome of the temperaments of his characters is one of the commonest of Shaw's methods. We have Candida deciding to choose her husband ; (Tanner marrying Ann in spite of himself) Dudgeon, the ne'er-do-weel, acting as a hero ; Cleopatra, the child, giving advice to Cæsar ; and so on. The characters represent forces which lead by a natural necessity to such a reversal of rôles, and produce a laughable effect.

"A situation," writes Bergson, "is always comic when it belongs simultaneously to two completely independent series of events, and when it can be simultaneously interpreted in two entirely different senses."

Of this character is the misunderstanding in *The Devil's Disciple*, where Richard Dudgeon is mistaken for the minister Anderson ; and we find similar misunderstandings in *You Never Can Tell*, in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, etc. Passing from characters and situations, to the expression of ideas, to the words employed, we have on the same footing the device of the double meaning, and this also is employed by Shaw to arouse laughter. Let us recall the scene between Tanner and Violet, who is pregnant and supposed to be unmarried, in the first act of *Man and Superman* ; the scene between Anderson and Judith after the arrest of Richard,

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in *The Devil's Disciple* ; the scene between Crofts and Vivie, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* ; the scene between Morell and Marchbanks, in the last act of *Candida*.

We find also in Shaw's work the comedy that comes from the repetition of words. We have this in the scene in which Bluntschli is alone, at the end of the first act of *Arms and the Man* : we have Burgess reiterating in *Candida* that all the others are mad ; but in the latter case we have intermingled the comedy of ideas, of the repetition of the same idea, namely that in Candida's house they are all more or less mad.

In Shaw's work we find few studied jests, few epigrams even, except those which are the necessary outcome of the characters and the situations. He does not labour to be witty, nor does he play upon words—we find word-plays, it is true, but they are rare. Shaw's brilliancy does not consist in wit, but in humour. Humour is distinguished from wit by the fact that humour springs naturally out of reality, a reality noted with extreme minuteness and precision. Humour consists far more of observation than does wit, whereas wit is made up of imagination, of fantasy. Wit is found in the words used ; it is expressed by the writer. Humour is not expressed by the writer ; it is perceived by the reader or by the spectator, and all that the writer

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does is to induce this perception unfailing<sup>2</sup> put Humour depends more upon the comedy of ideas than upon the comedy of words, a matter to which we shall return shortly.

Comedy is found also in the introduction of a technical, peculiar, or common mode of speech into the everyday relationships of educated people. Shaw does not forget to use this method. He makes us laugh at the sporting terms employed by Frank and by Mrs. Warren, at the professional jargon of Paramore, and at that of all the medical men in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. The comedy of language is sometimes accentuated by its contrast with the assumed personality of the speaker. We see this when Mrs. Warren suddenly relapses into her natural tongue, the dialect of a woman of the people ; we see it in the conversation of Lickcheese in *Widowers' Houses* ; in that of Burgess, in *Candida* ; in that of Dora, in *Fanny's First Play*. Sometimes the comedy arises from the contrast between the language employed and the personality of the individual to whom it is addressed, as with the slangy speech of Straker, in *Man and Superman*, or with the language of Hodson, in *John Bull's Other Island*, or that of Elisa and of Doolittle, in *Pygmalion*, etc.

Another method of inducing laughter employed by the comic poet is to superimpose upon what

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is professionally ridiculous some element of the physically ridiculous. Shaw does not hesitate to avail himself of this method, as we see in the Rev. Samuel Gardner, in Crofts, Burgess, Paramore, Cokane, Doolittle, Gilbey, etc. We laugh, too, whenever by the use of a word a human being is more or less identified with a thing or with an animal. This is why we laugh when Marchbanks likens human souls to cheap earthenware; when Doyle, in *John Bull's Other Island*, compares the Englishman to a caterpillar; when Tanner speaks of himself as woman's prey, and of woman as a spider; when Frank compares Mrs. Warren to a sparrow—Mrs. Warren about whom there is certainly nothing of the sylph. In the last comparison we have also the comic effect resulting from the fact that the use of the word "sparrow" directs our attention to Mrs. Warren's figure at the very moment when we are concerned only about her morals. The same kind of comedy is used also by Bernard Shaw in several scenes in *The Man of Destiny*, and in others of his plays. In *Candida*, the personality of Eugene Marchbanks, the poet, arouses laughter almost all through the play, simply in consequence of the young man's timidity. We may recall here the just remark of Bergson: "Timidity gives us the impression that the timid person finds his body troublesome, and that he is

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looking round for some safe place in which to put it." This is what we feel about Marchbanks.

The slightest incident which calls attention to the physical when we are chiefly concerned with the moral is always comic, whether because it directly produces laughter, or merely because it provokes a reaction from a situation which has previously seemed tragical. The simple fact of sitting down may take us from tragedy to comedy; the body takes precedence of the soul. For example, in the third act of *Candida*, when the heroine of the play makes her choice, the emotion of the scene, which has been extremely tense, is suddenly relaxed when Candida says, "Let us sit," nor does the tension recur until the end, when Marchbanks rises.

Imitation makes us laugh. Thus we laugh, in *Candida*, when Lexy imitates Morell, and when Proserpine imitates Lexy's imitation; when, in *You Never Can Tell*, Dolly imitates McComas and Bohun; when, in *Man and Superman*, Tanner imitates Straker.

We have thus seen that Bernard Shaw's drama is comic in respect of its incidents, its characters and its diction; but this is not the whole sequence of his comedy. These things form altogether a minor part of it, for the Shawian comedy is at all times all a comedy of ideas. It is this comedy of ideas

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superadded to the comedy of incident, character, and diction, which so greatly increases the pleasure of the spectator or of the reader.

The inversion of ideas produces comedy no less than the inversion of rôles. It is comic, for example, to claim to model things upon ideas instead of modelling ideas upon things; it is comic to see the thing one is thinking of instead of thinking of that which is really before one's eyes. It is for this reason that an effect of comedy is produced by all the romantically minded characters in Shaw's plays: Raina and Sergius, in *Arms and the Man*; Mrs. Warren, Crofts, and Trench, in *Widowers' Houses*; Burgess, in *Candida*; Roebuck Ramsden, in *Man and Superman*; Broadbent, in *John Bull's Other Island*; Britannus, in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*.

In these cases the comedy is accentuated by the inversion of ideas in characters of antagonistic types. Such inversion takes the form of seeing things as they really are instead of leaving them covered with romantic and conventional trappings. Irvie, Bluntschli, Richard Dudgeon, Tanner, arteris, Laurence Doyle, Cæsar, Keegan, inbedat, and many others, are characters dismying comedy of this nature.

"A comic effect is produced by these characters perart because in the ideas to which they give

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expression they change the customary values of things and of concepts. They make us regard as absurd and grotesque what we are in the habit of regarding as just and right, and conversely. Such a transposition of values is a comic method frequently utilized by Shaw. Mrs. Warren, for instance, speaks with respect of her occupation as procuress; Sartorius of his position as owner of slum dwellings; Bluntschli and Napoleon speak of the soldier's trade in such terms as might be used by a commercial traveller; Burgess refers to the work of a minister of religion as he would to that of a retail tradesman; Doolittle speaks of his occupation as a dustman as if it were of a higher order than that of a landlord.

Another way of transposing ideas is by exaggeration. This is frequently employed by Shaw. When Eugene Marchbanks makes us laugh in *Candida*, it is partly owing to his childish and poetic exaggeration; and many of Shaw's other characters verge upon caricature.

In a subtle analysis Bergson concludes that an effect of comedy is produced by the display of rigid fact, of the mechanical element in life. "All that is serious in life," he tells us, "is the outcome of our liberty. . . . To transform the serious drama of life into comedy we must show that this liberty is but apparent, that it is a veil concealing

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the strings by which the puppets are moved." It may be said that the whole of Shaw's dramatic work is an illustration of this thought of Bergson's. By the sincerity, the frankness, with which his characters express themselves, stripping off one another's masks to their mutual confusion, he shows how illusory is this liberty. The characters speak with so much sincerity that they display all the odiousness of their actions (it suffices to recall Burgess, Sartorius, Crofts, Mrs. Warren, Crampton, General Burgoyne, Matthew Haffigan, and Broadbent); yet even as we perceive this, the sense that they are odious disappears, for we understand that their conduct is not deliberate, that their actions have been inevitably and automatically determined, and that they are altogether without understanding of the moral value of these actions. The spectator or the reader is shown very vividly the automatism of the individual, whose acts are motivated by social conventions and who voluntarily deceives himself. Natural ideas and sentiments are placed in opposition to mechanical ideas and sentiments, and the mechanical aspect of life is so conspicuously displayed that we cannot help but laugh. It is with good reason that Peter Keegan observes, in *John Bull's Other Island*: "My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world."

The whole of Shaw's drama is determinist, and



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as the determining springs of action are displayed to the eyes of all, by the dissection of motives and of sentiments, the general effect is one of comedy. He makes us laugh by showing us that society is not based upon reason or logic. This is why it has been said that paradox is Shaw's favourite method. Society is seen to wear a mask. Shaw shows the onlooker that instead of taking part in a really living society he is one of the actors in a social masquerade, that conventions and prejudices have been substituted for the laws of nature. He shows that all is inert, manufactured, mechanical; and the recognition of this provokes laughter. We laugh at the expense of the prejudices and the conventions which are conquered by nature, and it is for this reason that the Shavian comedy has a moralizing influence.

Bergson has described laughter as "a kind of social art." This definition is absolutely true of the laughter induced by Shaw's plays, so clearly do they display the illogicality, irrationality, and absurdity of the conventions, laws, and principles upon which contemporary society is based. To the reflective mind, the Shavian comedy is at times saddening, precisely because of the clear light which it throws upon existing social principles, and because of the sense of strain which results from its display of society with the paint rubbed off. For

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this reason the actor must carefully avoid allowing himself to fall into the tragic tone when he is rendering certain passages of Bernard Shaw.

We recognize in these plays a minute and meticulous description of what really exists. The smallest details are noted—recall, for example, in *Candida*, the peeling of the onions and the use of the sauce-pan brush—always coldly and indifferently. The precise facts and the technical details are explained in concrete terms; souls and things are stripped of that clothing of convention which consists of ready-made ideas automatically and unreflectingly accepted by human beings. This vein of humour makes us smile and laugh because it shows us all that there is of mechanical, automatic, in a word of non-living, in the ordinary conception of life and in the usual mode of existence.

In Bernard Shaw's work we find but little that is comic in the way of character. His men are types of a class, a profession, or a sect, and not individual characters. He makes some of them almost burlesque by isolating in them the most conspicuous characteristic of their class or of their profession. Take Burgess, for example, who, as a synthesis of the capitalist bourgeois, looks at everything from the business point of view. Among all the female characters there is not one of a comic type. We could hardly describe as comic

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characters Dolly, in *You Never Can Tell*, Cleopatra, in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, Sylvia, in *The Philanderer*, Sarah, in *Major Barbara*, or Fanny, in *Fanny's First Play*. These *enfants terribles* are not comic in themselves, but in consequence of the comedy which they evoke from things or from other individuals. Moreover, one of the peculiarities of the Shavian comedy is that there issues from ordinary individuals, from Mr. Anybody, by a simple process of illumination, by the sayings and doings of the characters themselves, a display of the automatism, of the mechanical processes, which exist within them, in their way of living, or in their conception of life.

The whole of Bernard Shaw's drama is comic. Always he produces a smile, often open laughter, and sometimes the unrestrained laughter which comes from the witnessing of farce. (He is not, in fact, afraid to intersperse with farce the lofty comedy of his drama). We recognize as pure farce, in the third act of *Candida*, the entrance of Proserpine, a trifle tipsy, and of Levy, extremely exhilarated, after Burgess's champagne supper; in the second act of *Man and Superman*, the dialogue between Tanner and "The Legs"—that is to say all that is seen of Straker protruding from beneath the motor-car; the account of Broadbent's adventure with a pig in his motor-car, in *John Bull's*

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*Other Island*; the contest between the Husband and the Poet in *How he Lied to her Husband*; the scene between the Lieutenant and the Lady, in *The Man of Destiny*; the masked ball, in *You Never Can Tell*; the fall of Cæsar and his companions into the sea; and many other incidents. It would seem as if Shaw always desired, in every one of his plays, to introduce an element of farce. He himself sees the farcical element everywhere, even in the saddest things, such as the fear of death, and such as death itself. He makes us laugh at Bluntschli and his fear of death in the first act of *Arms and the Man*; and he intermingles farce in Dubedat's death scene in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. But when we recognize to what an extent Shaw's drama is a moral force we perceive that farce is the sauce with which he seasons the dish. It is the honey he uses in order to disguise the bitterness of the pill he wishes his audience to swallow.

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The intermingling of the burlesque and of the tragical which we have just been describing leads us to the consideration of another of the characteristics of Shaw's plays, their realism. In actual life nothing is commoner than the conjuncture of farce and tragedy. Every one who wishes to convince himself of this has only to delve into his own memories. Since this is one of the primary data

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of experience it must find a place in Shaw's drama, for our author is a scrupulous realist. He depicts life according to nature—not as it masquerades in its conventional make-up, but as it is in its pure nudity. As he has well said: "In my plays you will not be vexed and bothered by happy endings, kindness, virtue, crime, the romantic, or any other nonsense of the sort. They deal with one subject only, life; and they possess but one merit, an interest in life. . . . The ordinary theatre-goer, surfeited with the romantic drama, has lost all sense of its unreality and insincerity. He mistakes human nature as he sees it staged for human nature as it truly is, whereas the former is in reality a bitter satire. The consequence is that when I present true human nature the audience thinks it is being made fun of. In reality, I am simply a very careful writer of natural history."

Bernard Shaw is a realist, and he therefore does not exhibit characters made of the same quality throughout, either all good or all bad. He shows them to us as they are, with their follies, their goodness, their spitefulness, their vanity, their kindness, their egoism, their passion, their suffering, their violence; all this is intermingled to form an amusing compost. It also produces an effect of shock, for it disregards the ordinary dramatic convention of exhibiting characters which are

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consistently bad or consistently good. Shaw's characters are contradictory ; they are reasonable and illogical, cold and passionate, calm and agitated ; in a word, they are alive, and they live intensely. They are not simple, but complex, as are all living beings. Not one of them is altogether sympathetic to us, not one altogether antipathetic. They are neither stage villains nor heroes of romance ; they are men and women of flesh and blood, with good qualities and with bad ones, simply acting after their various natures. They explain their actions and their sentiments with perfect sincerity, regardless of the conventions, and with no fear of shocking the spectator. They say all that they think, and thus show what they really are, even to the inmost core of their being. They make a great point of being truthful, but the habit of lying is so deeply rooted in the human mind that they refuse sometimes to believe one another ; occasionally, moreover, some of the critics have been able to see lies only in these truths, and nothing but insincerity where there is in reality perfect sincerity.

Another manifestation of Shaw's realism is that in none of his plays do we find one character to whom all the others are sacrificed. Just as in actual life, there are a number of persons of more or less equal importance. Bernard Shaw's plays

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do not allow a theatrical star to eclipse every one else upon the stage ; but they need actors of the very highest ability to furnish a truthful interpretation of characters whose life is so vigorous and so stimulating. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Crofts, Frank, Vivie, and Mrs. Warren ; in *Candida*, Morell, Candida, Marchbanks, and Burgess ; in *Widowers' Houses*, Sartorius, Lickcheese, Trench, and Blanche ; in *You Never Can Tell*, William, Valentine, Gloria, Mrs. Clandon, and the Twins are all of equal importance. I give these examples only, but the like consideration applies to every one of the plays.

The realism of his dramatic method is shown also by the repetition of the same ideas, two or three times over, with a more and more striking force, a thing which often happens in real life. A typical example is to be found in the dialogues between Mrs. Warren and Vivie, in the second and fourth acts of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. We find this repetition of ideas in all the plays ; it is the inevitable outcome of their structure as comedy.

When we study the motives of human action we find, in ultimate analysis, that egoism is the mainspring that sets men in motion. Now, Shaw's characters, displaying themselves quite sincerely, invariably show that all their actions are finally dictated by egoism. It is in their own interest

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that they act, even when their actions are most altruistic. It is through egoism that Candida remains with her husband, that Vivie breaks with her mother, that Grace and Charteris do not marry, and that Julia and Paramore marry, that Tanner first of all runs away from Ann and then marries her, that Richard Dudgeon allows himself to be taken for the minister Anderson, that Ridgeon allows Dubedat to die, that Cæsar does not yield to Cleopatra. Here also we see how vivid is the realism of Shaw's plays.

In real life we are interested in other things besides love and hate—which is love's contrary, but so closely akin to love. Bernard Shaw, as a realist, is interested in other things besides love, and he makes love play a quite accessory part, if we understand the term "love" in its romantic sense. If, however, by "love" we understand the physiological sexual attraction, experienced for its natural end in the perpetuation of the species, we find that love occupies an important place in the plays, and is the very essence of some of them, such as *You Never Can Tell*, *Widowers' Houses*, *Man and Superman*, and *The Philanderer*. Here we have another manifestation of realism. But in the plays, as in real life, this sexual attraction does not constitute the whole of life, does not occupy it completely. In conformity with strict



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realism, the characters are not always and unceasingly concerned with sexual attraction. They are interested in other things, in everything which interests human beings in actual life, commerce, industry, politics, science, literature, art, philosophy—all that is human.

Shaw's realism carries its own moral with it. It invites us to discard all conventions and all laws, and to follow nature.

In the Shavian drama realism is also at times displayed in *dénouements* which are not really anything of the kind. This is what occurs also in life, where nothing begins and nothing is finished. In most cases the end of the play—I cannot speak of it as the *dénouement* because no knot is untied—is altogether unexpected, and this is extremely attractive. Let us recall Candida choosing her husband, the apotheosis of Undershaft in *Major Barbara*, Vivie's refusal of the gilded ease offered by her mother.

To be perfect, realism must be absolutely impersonal. In his plays the author should not show us his own ideas or his own passions. From this point of view Shaw's realism is somewhat defective, notwithstanding his desire to be impartial. It is true that the characters express all that they have to say with the sentiments and ideas appropriate to their nature, to their temperament, to their

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environment. They develop the whole of their thought freely, without slurring any delicate matter, and they are all equally right in their contradictory opinions when their special points of view are taken into consideration. All this is pure realism. But Shaw has the proselytizer's passion, and this leads him to voice through some of the characters the ideas to which he is himself devoted and induces him to give to these characters a certain preference over the others. To this extent his drama ceases to be absolutely impersonal and absolutely realist.

Here we have to recognize a trifling lack of realism in the Shavian play, taken as a whole, although each individual character is real. But this lack of realism is minimal in contrast with the extreme realism of all his characters—a realism pushed so far that often (as in actual life) there is no conclusion, so that we ask ourselves what the author is driving at.

Often, too, the incidents are highly improbable, although each one of the characters is real and true to life, whether considered individually or in relation with the other characters. *The Man of Destiny* illustrates this statement very well, for the leading incident of the play—Napoleon's encounter in a wayside inn at Tavazzano, after the battle of Lodi, with a lady who has stolen his dispatches—

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is altogether improbable, whilst the characters are most realistically lifelike.

This introduces us to the third characteristic of Shaw's dramatic method, the absence or the insufficiency of plot, of incident, of action.

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Those familiar with the contemporary drama are apt, at first, to find the structure of Shaw's plays somewhat disconcerting. They are immediately impressed by the total lack of action, if by this term we understand "a development of incident which forms the plot of the play." It is really impossible to say what are the incidents which make up the plot of the play in *You Never Can Tell*, *Man and Superman*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Major Barbara*, *John Bull's Other Island*, *Getting Married*, etc. It is impossible for the simple reason that there really is no plot at all. In some of the plays, however, we do find a development of incident which seems to constitute a plot. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* we have Frank's love for Vivie; in *Widowers' Houses*, Trench's love for Blanche; in *Candida*, the love of Marchbanks for Candida. I say "seems to constitute a plot," for, as a moment's consideration shows, the real topic of these plays is not an incident but an idea—a question of moral values: for instance, the morality of acquiring

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wealth by procurement or by the ownership of slum dwellings. We perceive the incident to be factitious, to be introduced for a specific purpose—namely, to furnish opportunity for the expression of profound ideas, of penetrating truths.

If instead of contenting ourselves with a superficial analysis of Bernard Shaw's work we submit it to a minute analysis, searching into its intimate structure, we find in the plays an intense action which I shall speak of as INTELLECTUAL, because we have not to do here with a development of incident, but with "the development of an idea or of a series of ideas which forms the topic of the play." In contradistinction with this I shall use the term MATERIAL action to denote "a development of incident forming the topic of the play," this MATERIAL action being what is usually understood by the "action" of the play. The INTELLECTUAL action, which in Shaw's plays replaces the MATERIAL action to which we are accustomed, is perfectly coherent and admirably arranged. It gives rise to a rapid movement; to situations which are expressive, amusing or pathetic, and strong; in a word, it is this which makes his plays so wonderful an instrument of pleasure and of thought.

Thus, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, the intellectual action consists in the development of the

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idea, What is the moral value of a fortune acquired by a procuress? In *Widowers' Houses* it consists in the development of the idea, What is the moral value of a fortune maintained by the ownership of slum dwellings? In most cases, however, the INTELLECTUAL action develops a series of ideas voiced by a central figure moving among the other characters and on the same level of importance with these—for we must not forget that the Shavian drama has no place for “stars.” The reason is that the figure in question is central in an ideological sense only, and not in a material one. The ideas and the character of this individual dictate all that he does and says, and his sayings and doings exercise a necessary reaction upon those of all the other *dramatis personæ*. Everything starts from this individual and everything returns to him, but on the ideological plane only and not on the material plane. In *Candida* it is Morell; in *Arms and the Man* it is Bluntschli; in *You Never Can Tell*, Mrs. Clandon; in the *Philanderer*, Charteris; in *Man and Superman*, Tanner; in *The Devil's Disciple*, Richard Dudgeon; in *John Bull's Other Island*, Laurence Doyle; and so on. The intellectual action of the play draws its movement, derives all its interest, from the ideas of this central figure. We might even say, at the cost of a trifling exaggeration, that the other

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characters spring to life out of the ideas of the central figure. They appear on the stage, in fact, in order to allow the topic to develop in its fullest amplitude, and for this reason it is their function to voice conflicting and contradictory or complementary ideas.

Each one of the plays is the logical development of an idea or a series of ideas of which the staged figures are merely an embodiment. This intellectual action, as it develops, necessitates and gives birth to situations, incidents, to what is usually spoken of as the *action* of the play, to what I speak of as its *material action*. What matter if this be improbable, incoherent, loose, complex, fantastical, lacking both problem and solution; since the intellectual action develops in accordance with probability, is logical and coherent.

The material action is completely subordinated to the intellectual action, and for this reason the material action is frequently so slight that some critics have contended that it is not worth considering; it is so unreal that it has been justly described as a fairy-tale for grown-ups. It is owing to this subordination of the material action that the plays have no plot, no material theme which it is possible to state in concise terms. If we make the attempt, we usually arrive at nothing more than an unmeaning collocation of words.

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Owing to the absence of material theme it results that we do not find, as is the usual custom, an exposition of the material action in the first act and a *dénouement* in the last act. But in the first act of Shaw's plays we have an exposition of the INTELLECTUAL action. We are shown characters or types which live for us as soon as they speak, which are solidly planted from the first moment of their appearance, and which assume a more and more definite form in proportion as there develops, logically and naturally, the intellectual action of which they are the protagonists. It is upon the subordination of material action that is dependent the poverty of incident in Bernard Shaw's plays, and upon this depends his infrequent use of the comedy of incident.

To the same subordination of material action it is due that many of the incidents and events which are introduced and more or less developed seem to have no bearing on the general action of the play. Sometimes it might even be said that each act serves for the development of a different material action. It results that in many cases characters appear in a single act and are not seen again. This happens with Mrs. Dudgeon and with General Burgoyne, in the first and in the third acts of *The Devil's Disciple*; with the barrister Bohun, who is seen in the fourth act only of *You*

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*Never Can Tell*; with Timothy Haffigan, in the first act of *John Bull's Other Island*. The incidents have occurred, the characters have appeared and disappeared, only because they were necessary to the intellectual action which constitutes the real subject of the play.

The subordination of the material action to the intellectual action has as its result that most of the incidents are extremely simple, scenes of private life. Hence, too, the author attaches no importance to the material action. He therefore sees no reason why he should not take the incidents of his material action from the works of other dramatists. Unblushingly he makes free with the writings of Robertson, of Gilbert, of Meilhac and Halévy, of Sardou, or of Ibsen. For him, in fact, the essence of the play does not consist in the incidents of its material action, but in that intellectual action of which the characters are merely the living symbols. This appropriation seems to him so natural that he tells us about it in his amusing stage directions. Shaw, too, accepts and gladly utilizes the tricks and artifices of the playwright. Fine dresses, pretty scenery, a meal on the stage—he makes use of them all. It would be an exaggeration to say that his plays might just as well be performed in any dress, and without scenery, for the environment in which the



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figures move influences their characters. It is, however, true that costumes and scenery play a very secondary part in his work, a part less significant even than that played by the material action.

Thus Bernard Shaw's dramas have little or no incident, and they are, moreover, indefinite, absurd, unreal, and improbable. But beside and behind this vague material action we have the intellectual action, which is extraordinarily powerful, and very much alive. This is the secret of the wonderfully brisk movement whose existence in Shaw's plays is recognized by every one. The interest never flags for a moment. The movement is not simply sustained, but undergoes acceleration, becomes intensified by the animated discussions, by the sparkle of conversation, which is lively, impetuous, clear, agreeable, profound, witty, and natural. The movement is as intense, as furious, if the term be permissible, as in the smartest of low comedies; but it is a movement of ideas, an intellectual and not a material movement. The spectator is none the less interested to a high degree. Amused by the comedy, he impatiently awaits the sequence, not of events but of ideas—the ideas given out by the characters, the interplay of whose arguments is so impassioned, so vehement, and so witty that it cannot fail to move us. This intellectual action

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is always exposed to view in the first act, and developed in those which follow, to attain its climax in the last act but one; the *dénouement*, or, to speak more strictly, the conclusion, being reserved for the last act.

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As Bergson has justly pointed out, pathos has no greater enemy than laughter. The appeal of laughter is to the pure intelligence, while the sentiment of pathos is the outcome of an influence exercised in the sphere of feeling. This is why the comic poet is compelled to eliminate pathos altogether, or at least to envelop it in laughable wrappings. Shaw has necessarily accepted this need of the art of comedy. He is too great a dramatist to eliminate pathos, but he veils it in laughter.

In his dramatic work tragedy sometimes arises from a collision between different characters, as between Morell and Marchbanks in the first and the third acts, or between Candida and Morell in the second and the third acts of *Candida*; between Mrs. Warren and Vivie in the second and the fourth acts, and between Crofts and Vivie in the third act of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; between the minister Anderson and his wife Judith in the second act of *The Devil's Disciple*. Sometimes the tragedy is the cry of a great and despairing passion, like

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that of Mrs. Dudgeon, in the first act of *The Devil's Disciple*.

Some of the characters in the plays may be said to be tragical throughout, like Julia, in *The Philanderer*, and Judith, in *The Devil's Disciple*. More frequently, however, the tragedy makes itself felt through the enveloping laughter, but does not positively come into the open. Of this nature, for example, are the scenes between Raina and Bluntschli, in the first act of *Arms and the Man*; between Crampton and the Twins, his children, in the second act of *You Never Can Tell*; between Lickcheese and Trench, in the second act of *Widowers' Houses*. Less often the scene moves frankly to pathos, though there is always intermingled an element of laughter, faintly sensible, as in *The Devil's Disciple* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*, and as in the scene of the choice in *Candida*.

In truth, in most of Shaw's plays there is so large an element of tragedy that we may sometimes ask ourselves whether we are dealing with tragedies or with comedies. A proof of this statement may be found in what happened when *Candida* was staged in Paris, where some very trifling changes in the treatment of the play by the actors transposed into the tragical mood what should have been dealt with as comedy.

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An analysis of Shaw's drama shows very clearly that his characters are specific types and varieties of human beings, and are not exceptional individuals. Nor could it be otherwise, for Shaw is a writer of comedy. The comic dramatist, from the very nature of his art, tends to generalize, assembling in each character the peculiarities of a number of individuals of the same species, it may be from the point of view of temperament, it may be from that of nationality, class, or social caste, or it may be from that of profession or sect. As the naturalist describes physical or physiological types, the comic poet describes psychological types. He gives us a study of collective psychology. Shaw, then, describes psychological types, assembling in his characters the likenesses we observe in the individuals whom we encounter in everyday life. Thus, in the whole of his dramas we find not a single pathological individual, not a single case of mental disorder. Marchbanks, in *Candida*, Peter Keegan, in *John Bull's Other Island*, Dubedat, in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, do not suffer from psychosis. All that one can say of them is that they contrast strongly with the persons among whom they live. In Bernard Shaw's plays all the characters are healthy and normal (by which I do not mean to imply that they are exactly like every one else).

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Whereas the male figures in the plays do not represent types of individual character, the female figures do represent such individual types. I mean, for example, that we do not find a picture of the absent-minded man, the miser, the gambler, the irascible, or the malevolent man. We do, however, find a picture of the born rebel. This character is depicted again and again under different variations (John Tanner, Richard Dudgeon, Blanco Posnet, Vivie, Mendoza, Mrs. Clandon, and Margaret); and in many other figures in the plays we find more or less numerous elements of this type. But apart from this single exception, we have no presentment of individual masculine characters, while there are a number of individual feminine characters. Thus we have types of the irascible woman, of the female hypocrite, of the sensual woman, of the positive woman, of the woman who loves passionately, who is romantically minded, philosophically minded, or of a calculating disposition. Among the male figures, on the other hand, we have pictures of national and professional types, of the types of class, caste, and sect. In one or in several characters in the same play Shaw gives us a synthetic presentation of the opinions, the ideas, and the sentiments common to a single nation, a single profession, class, caste, or sect.

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It is not as a rule possible to him to effect this synthesis within the limits of a single character, because he wishes to display the different varieties of the same psychological species.

Many of his characters verge upon caricature, some in the direction of the ludicrous, others in that of the amusing. Ludicrous, for instance, are the Rev. Samuel Gardner, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; Cuthbertson and Craven, in *The Philanderer*; Ramsden and Malone, in *Man and Superman*; Burgess, in *Candida*; Petkoff, in *Arms and the Man*; Crampton and McComas, in *You Never Can Tell*; Doolittle, in *Pygmalion*. Amusing are Frank, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; Sylvia, in *The Philanderer*; Cleopatra, in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*; Philip and Dolly, in *You Never Can Tell*; Margaret, Bob, and Dora, in *Fanny's First Play*.

Although these characters are pushed into the limits of the grotesque, they have, just like the others, a life proper to themselves, a physiognomy of their own, a true being, appropriate thoughts and expressions.

All the characters act after their own nature, in accordance with the strictest logic. They have a firm footing and their life is real and intense. In precision and realism of detail the portraits of Shaw's drama recall the admirable portraits of

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Holbein. His caricatures, however, recall rather the works of Hogarth, of Daumier, and of Gavarni, and like these they are living, and exhibit an extraordinary resemblance to their models.

We have said that in the Shavian drama there is usually to be found a central figure, voicing a series of ideas whose development constitutes the intellectual action of the play. In conformity with the needs of the technique of comedy, the other characters gravitating around the central figure present the same general traits, belong to the same social class, nationality, or profession, as the central figure, so as to display its varied aspects, and, in a word, to render concrete for our minds the diverse varieties of a single nation, class, or profession. Thus, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, capitalism with all its variations is personified by Mrs. Warren, Crofts, and Frank; in *Widowers' Houses*, it is personified by Sartorius, Trench, Lickcheese, and Cokane; in *Candida*, by Burgess; in *Major Barbara*, by Undershaft; in *John Bull's Other Island*, by Cornelius Doyle, Matthew Haffigan, Doran, and Broadbent. The military profession is symbolized for us by Bluntschli and Sergius, in *Arms and the Man*; by the Lieutenant and Napoleon, in *The Man of Destiny*; by General Burgoyne, Major Swindon, and the Sergeant, in *The Devil's Disciple*; by Rufio, Achilles, and other soldiers, in *Cæsar and Cleo-*

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*patra*. The medical profession is represented by Paramore, in *The Philanderer*, and by nearly all the characters in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. The legal profession is exhibited by McComus and Bohun, in *You Never Can Tell*; by the lawyer, Hawkins, in *The Devil's Disciple*; and by the judge, Howard Allan, in *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. The clergy is summed up for us in the Rev. Samuel Gardner of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; in Morell and Lexy Mill, of *Candida*; in the Minister Antony Anderson, of *The Devil's Disciple*; in the bishop and the other clergy of *Getting Married*; in Renkin of *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*; in Father Dempsey, the parish priest, and in the ex-priest Keegan, in *John Bull's Other Island*. The æsthete is symbolized in Marchbanks; in Praed of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; in Apollodorus of *Cæsar and Cleopatra*; in Octavius of *Man and Superman*; in Dubedat, of *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

As regards sectarian types, we find in Shaw's plays hardly more than two; the Socialist character, of which we have several varieties, shown in Morell, Tanner, Straker, Mendoza, Lawrence Doyle, and Keegan; and the Liberal-Radical character displayed in Sartorius, Trench, Ramsden, and Broadbent. The only national types he depicts are the English, the Irish, and the American. American types are the two Malones, father and son,



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in *Man and Superman*, and the title figure in *The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet*. As Irish types we have eight of the characters of *John Bull's Other Island*. English types are scattered more or less throughout the plays, but the most characteristically English figure is that of Broadbent, in *John Bull's Other Island*, his traits being thrown into such high relief by contrast with the Irish types.

The vivifying action of Shaw's drama is an intellectual action; moreover, the ideas voiced by the characters in the plays are not solely those accepted by the majority at the present day. I mean, that the characters do not embody the expression of those social principles only upon which contemporary capitalist society is founded. They embody, in addition, the ideas of a minority, ideas upon which, in the view of those who compose that minority, will be founded the society of to-morrow—a society which is from day to day in process of formation. The dramatist displays to us the types of to-morrow as well as those of to-day. He gives us, therefore, Tanner, *the Superman*, with his varieties Richard Dudgeon, Charteris, Brassbound, and Morell; he gives us Mrs. Clandon, with her varieties Gloria, Dolly, Grace, Sylvia, Vivie, Candida, Lady Cecily, and Barbara.

As the heroes of his pieces Shaw chooses simple and everyday personalities; and if, perchance, he

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stages some historical hero, such as Cæsar or Napoleon, he exhibits these, not as exceptional but as ordinary beings, people like the rest of the world. No man is a hero to his valet, says an old adage whose source I have forgotten. To the comic dramatists, also, no man is a hero. Comedy cannot depict exceptional beings; this is left for tragedy. Comedy must give us ordinary men, Mr. Everybody, and when the comic dramatist chooses for hero some exceptional being such as Cæsar or Napoleon he must display those traits only which the exceptional being shares with the rest of the world. Shaw necessarily obeys this rule of the comic dramatist's art.

In the Shavian drama that which distinguishes the heroes from the other characters is that they speak the truth quietly and naturally, and that they disregard convention, *having an objective understanding of the value of their own and of others' actions*. They do not live one life while believing in another. They live a real life, life as it is, the Tanners, the Charterises, the Vivies, the Lawrence Doyles, the Mrs. Clandons, the Candidas, and the Margarets. This understanding of the value of actions is one of the most remarkable features of Shaw's drama.

Another notable peculiarity is the introduction of the philosophically minded man of the people

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whom we encounter so frequently in the plays. The most perfect example of this is the waiter, William, in *You Never Can Tell*. But we have also Straker and Mendoza, in *Man and Superman*; Nicola, in *Arms and the Man*; Giuseppe, in *The Man of Destiny*; Hodson, in *John Bull's Other Island*; William Collins, in *Getting Married*; Emma, in *The Doctor's Dilemma*; Juggins, in *Fanny's First Play*. These common folk play very important parts, and indeed their parts are sometimes more important than those of their middle or upper-class "masters." Here we obviously find a manifestation of the author's democratic and Socialist sentiments. This is one among many points in which Shaw displays his kinship with Molière.

The older persons in the plays, the fathers and the mothers, are, with two exceptions, presented in such a way as to make them appear ludicrous and often disagreeable. We see this in the Rev. Samuel Gardner, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*; Cuthbertson and Craven, in *The Philanderer*; Roebuck Ramsden, Miss Ramsden, and the elder Malone, in *Man and Superman*; Burgess, in *Candida*; Petkoff and Catherine, in *Arms and the Man*; Crampton and McComas, in *You Never Can Tell*; Mrs. Dudgeon, Uncle Titus, and Uncle William, in *The Devil's Disciple*; the Gilbeys and

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the Knoxes, in *Fanny's First Play*. The exceptions are Mrs. Clandon, in *You Never Can Tell*; and Sir Patrick, in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. These more or less ludicrous elders are by temperament obstinate, irritable, and authoritative; but in practice they are unable to make their authority felt, and are swayed by their children.

The characters exhibiting the full vigour of manhood, like Morell (*Candida*), John Tanner and Hector Malone (*Man and Superman*), Bluntschli and Sergius (*Arms and the Man*), Richard Dudgeon and Antony Anderson (*The Devil's Disciple*), Lawrence Doyle, Broadbent, and Keegan (*John Bull's Other Island*), Cæsar, Brassbound, Ridgeon, etc., are as a rule agreeable, robust, healthy-minded and strong, but their vigour is less striking than that of the female characters symbolizing the Life-Force. The very young men, nominally leading characters, are in reality of trifling psychological importance. Frank, Valentine, Trench and Octavius, seem to be introduced merely as sounding-boards, or to throw into relief the ideas of the other characters.

We have pointed out that in Shaw's plays the women are types of individual character, and are not, as are the men, types of professional character or class types. These female portraits are wonderfully varied. We have sentimental women (Mrs.

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Warren, Nora); positive women (Vivie, Vices Fanny, Margaret); passionate women (Julia, Judith); the sensuous type (Blanche); the romantically minded (Raina); the peppery woman (Proserpine); hypocrites (Ann, Mrs. Dudgeon); tragi-comedians (Ftataeteeta); women of a calculating disposition (Louka, the Lady); the intuitive type (Candida); the slave of love (Jennifer); the woman who does not understand herself (She, in *How He Lied to Her Husband*); the grasping woman (Mrs. Dudgeon); the woman of business (Mrs. Warren, Vivie); the maternal woman (Candida); the educationist (Mrs. Clandon); the philosophically minded (Grace, Mrs. Clandon). We have the young woman who symbolizes the Life-Force, the mystery of motherhood, and this type will be considered more fully when we come to discuss the philosophy of Bernard Shaw's dramas. Because they impersonate this Life-Force, these women triumph over man—Ann, Violet, Nora, Blanche, Gloria, Julia, Raina, Louka. He depicts for us also girls full of vitality, but in whom the Life-Force has not yet made itself manifest—Sylvia and Dolly, who are still little more than children.

In these portraits of women, whether they are mere sketches or finished in every detail, we find neither comic nor burlesque types, such as are displayed by many of the male characters of the plays.

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They are all genuine figures, intensely alive. They are never perfectly beautiful, neither wholly agreeable nor wholly disagreeable, never altogether good nor yet altogether bad. Some of them are really fascinating, mingling seductive grace, disingenuousness, and coquetry. Others, opinionated and strong-willed, natural and unconventional, may seem unpleasing, disagreeable, and even repellent; but this is merely because we are so unaccustomed to encounter such types in actual life, and because of our slavery to convention.

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To induce laughter, comedy must display the mechanical and automatic factors of our thoughts and actions. It must render apparent to every one that instead of moving in a really living environment we move in an environment of masquerade, in which prejudices and conventions take the place of natural laws. For this reason, criticism is the very life of comedy. The more forcibly it displays this automatism, the more attentively will it be listened to. Its mainspring is to be found in the contradiction between what is and what ought to be, or between the appearance of what is and the reality. Thus the effect produced is one of satire.

Bernard Shaw's comedies produce to a very high degree this effect of social satire, satire of our conventions, of our class prejudices, and of our pro-

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professional prejudices. In all his plays he satirizes audaciously, and the effect he produces is immense owing to the ruthlessness with which he displays the absurdity of conventions and prejudices. This ruthlessness does not find expression in a coarseness of terminology or of ideas, but in remorseless exhibition of the contrast between appearance and reality, using as its medium a style that is supple, precise, clear, brilliant, vigorous, and picturesque, and one which very often exhibits a moving poetic force. The dialogue, polished, ironical, profound, and simple, full at once of rare truths and of truisms, now using common forms of speech and now pedantic ones, at the same time correct and incorrect, concise and torrential, facile, natural, witty, and sarcastic, embodies a social satire which attains to a rare degree of intensity.

What Shaw shows to us in his comedies is not so much individual absurdities as social absurdities. What he shows us, in a form more or less caricatured, is not the seamy side of men but the seamy side of society. He dissects our society, he reveals its intimate structure and displays its follies. His comedy is therefore poor in those minutely detailed pictures of customs which teach the superficial aspects of things. When we see the house of the Petkoffs in Bulgaria, the inn at Tavazzano, the Minister Anderson's house, the terrace of the

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Marine Hotel, the library of the Ibsen Club, with the characters moving and speaking in these surroundings, we do not obtain a picture of Bulgarian manners, a picture of Napoleon, of the Americans during the War of Independence, of the well-to-do English at a seaside resort, or of an English club. No, these surroundings are merely the framework for the most penetrating, profound, and uncompromising criticism. This criticism does not find expression in the actions of the characters, but is embodied in the perfect sincerity with which these characters expose the real motives of their actions, or in the manner in which they strip the conventional mask from those who desire to retain it. Here we have one among several consequences of the purely intellectual character of the action.

This forcible criticism of our manners and customs is obtained by a disarticulation of social conventions, especially of those which conceal the foundations of contemporary capitalist society. For this reason Shaw's drama is extraordinarily rich in ideas, and some critics go so far as to complain that the wealth of ideas is excessive. This much is certain, that we cannot grasp all the ideas in one of his plays unless we have seen it performed repeatedly, unless we have read it again and again. Naturally, these ideas appear to us erroneous or sound according as we ourselves do or do not share



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them. Erroneous or sound, they abound in the plays. We even find that similar ideas are expounded several times, and with a cumulative vigour, in a single play, of which they constitute the intellectual action, and in this way they exercise a crescent influence upon the mind of the spectator or of the reader. The explanations of Mrs. Warren, in the second and the fourth acts of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, afford a typical example.

The superabundant ideas found in these plays are essentially revolutionary and subversive in their boldness. Bernard Shaw, far from having the mania of respect, may rather be said to have the mania of disrespect, for all his dramas constitute a school of the latter quality. His disrespect for everything conventionally respected is obvious at the first glance. With his sarcasms, with his penetrating irony, he attacks authority in all its forms, parental, family, marital, legal, judicial, or conventional. Thus he makes fun of old people, of parents; he shows their children striving against parental authority and triumphing over it. Quite frankly he takes a side in the family disputes, takes the side of the children, of youth symbolizing life, life which is always good despite its evils and its pettiness, against the parents, against old age, symbolizing decrepitude and death. Especially in *You Never Can Tell*, *Arms and the Man*, *Mrs.*

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*Warren's Profession*, *The Philanderer*, *Man and Superman*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *John Bull's Other Island*, and *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, do we find that the old are displayed as ridiculous while the young triumph.

Shaw's drama is a perpetual revolt against all constraint, against all discipline imposed from without. From this point of view his plays are a genuine school of anarchism. I employ this term "anarchism" in its true etymological sense, to denote the ideal of those who are "advocates of a society without authority," in accordance with the definition given in my work *Socialisme et Anarchisme*.

Marital authority is impugned, and the rights of woman are affirmed in *The Philanderer*, *Major Barbara*, *Candida*, *You Never Can Tell*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *John Bull's Other Island*, etc. Just as scattered throughout the plays we find attacks upon legal authority and upon the authority of convention, so also we find attacks upon hypocrisy. Shaw detests lying and hunts it down in every possible way, dealing no less severely with the lies of the lover than with worldly and social lies.

Lies told by lovers, romantic lies, are exposed and ridiculed in *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *You Never Can Tell*, *The Philanderer*, *Man and Superman*. The worldly lie, hypocrisy, is exposed more

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or less in all the plays. As for the social lie, its whole hideousness is displayed, as far as militarism and war are concerned, in *Arms and the Man*, *The Man of Destiny*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and *Press Cuttings*; as far as concerns capitalism and politics, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Widowers' Houses*, *Man and Superman*, *Candida*, *John Bull's Other Island*, and *Major Barbara*; as far as religion is concerned, in *Candida*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, and *John Bull's Other Island*; as far as concerns the administration of justice, in *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, and others.

We see that Shaw's drama is a campaign against hypocrisy in all its forms, not as a special thesis in one or several of the plays but in all of them. In every one the various forms of social, worldly, or sentimental lying are more or less completely demolished. We may say with justice that Shaw's plays are the most anti-romantic that have ever been written, more anti-romantic even than those of Molière.

The study of Shaw's drama shows us very clearly that, while touching upon everything that interests mankind—politics, art, love, Socialism, philosophy, the administration of justice, feminism, militarism,

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war, etc.—he displays throughout a wonderful unity of treatment. This unity is the outcome of the fact that Shaw possesses a philosophy of life, for the realization of which he looks to Socialism. This philosophy, which we shall study more fully in the sequel, is, alike from the negative or destructive and from the positive or constructive point of view, that of all Socialist and anarchist thinkers. Through the sayings and doings of his characters he affirms that the free play of instincts and the opposition to every kind of constraint give to the individual the maximum possible development. The aim of life is life itself—that is to say, the fullest possible development for every being, enabling him to enjoy to the utmost. But for any individual to be able to develop to the full, and thus to enjoy to the utmost of his capacity, it is necessary that all should have the same possibility. This possibility cannot be fulfilled until after the disappearance of capitalism, of militarism, of the administration of justice with its penalties and its punishments, of legal marriage, of coercive love, of authoritative education. This possibility will be fulfilled only when the entire social structure of capitalism has given place to a Socialist society whose members are free men and women, liberated from the bonds of capital, of authority, and of the thousandfold worldly,

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religious, and social conventions—in a word, when we have a society of supermen, capable of still further development. This is what is said and resaid, displayed and redisplayed, cried and cried again by all the characters of Shaw's drama, these characters incarnating the Life-Force, that force whose transformations are innumerable, illogical, and inconstant, but which pursues its aim without pause and without respite, regardless of all obstacles, pursues its single aim—to live.

All things are in reality subordinated to the Life-Force. The Life-Force determines more or less directly all individual phenomena, and therefore all collective phenomena, for the collectivity is made up of individuals. Consequently, this philosophy of life is determinist, and consequently, also, Shaw's dramatic work is determinist. All that we are able to do is to make the best possible use of what happens. We cannot resist our destiny. What must be will be. This is what we are told, more or less assertively, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Man of Destiny*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, *Candida*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Man and Superman*, *Pygmalion*, and *Fanny's First Play*—that admirable comedy which seems at first sight to be a farce, but which is extraordinarily rich in ideas. Man is not free; he is irresistibly determined; and whether he desires it or not he is

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subject to the Life-Force. This force has always the upper hand. Destiny, or fate, has always the upper hand. It results from this point of view that Shaw's drama is essentially meliorist, notwithstanding the severity of his social criticism, which gives his work a pessimistic aspect.

The Shavian comedy clothes its social criticism in so merry a dress that it carries with it those even who regard it as false. Many people believe that what is exaggerated, what provokes laughter, has no influence on the mind of the spectator or the reader. This opinion is altogether erroneous. The fact that an idea is enveloped in laughter by no means prevents its being understood. Insensibly it makes its way, penetrating the brain slowly but surely. This slow and continuous invasion is effected unconsciously, but it is effected. Laughter renders possible the penetration of ideas which would have been rejected had they been presented in a severer form. Laughter fulfils the function of the sugar or the honey employed by the pharmacist. This is why it is that the humourist is a moralist.

Nay, more, laughter exercises *per se* a moralizing influence. We hate having to laugh at ourselves ; if we laugh at a principle or an idea, it is because we see that it is false, that it is ridiculous. Naturally, then, we try to modify our views, so that

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we shall no longer have occasion to laugh at ourselves, and we abandon the contested principle or idea. Laughter is a powerful moralizing force, for it is a visible and striking manifestation of the opinion of others, by which man is influenced and must be influenced more and more. Laughter is a humane and natural means for the repression of discords. It is a wonderful instrument of self-improvement which is possessed by no other animal, and which man has the best possible reasons for employing. Laughter, then, tends towards self-correction, and helps us to accept correction which, in the absence of laughter, would have been violently repelled. It follows that the comedies of Shaw, like comedy in general, constitute a series of moral lessons. His dramas censure the ills of social life, proffering as the remedy for these the destruction of all the conventions and the acceptance of a realist view of what exists. His dramas exercise a moral influence, but the morality which they teach, as we shall learn from a profounder study, is not traditional morality, whether religious or lay, but revolutionary morality, that of the Socialist and anarchist thinkers.

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Certain additional peculiarities render Shaw's plays unique among contemporary dramas. They are not divided into scenes; and in some of the

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latest plays, such as *Getting Married* and *Misalliance*, there is not even a division into acts. If there is a change of locality, he gives us no indication that the scene is to be changed or that the curtain must be lowered for this purpose. He simply describes the new place (third act of *The Devil's Disciple*); or the material or intellectual action may be continued in the description he gives of the change of scene (second act of *John Bull's Other Island*). He does not follow the usual custom of furnishing us with a list of characters at the beginning of the play. On the other hand, he supplies lengthy stage directions, describing not merely those details which concern the costumier, the hairdresser, or the stage carpenter, but describing also with the most meticulous care the physical and mental condition of each character at the time of his first appearance on the stage. Moreover, throughout the play, almost every gesture is described, so that the reader, no less than the spectator, has a key to the state of mind of each character at every moment of the intellectual or material action. These long stage directions describing the mental states of the characters furnish the reader with a substitute for that mimic play of the actors which, for the spectator, serves to complete and particularize the dialogue, and to establish the moral history of all the persons of the drama.



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The consequence is that in reading the plays we have a sort of romance in the form of dialogue. Just as in the novel, the descriptions of the persons and of the environment are minutely detailed ; but, since they are stated concisely, they do not interrupt the movement essential to the drama. In the novel this movement is lacking, and for this reason the novel is less forcible and less varied. This method—the lengthy stage directions and the abandonment of the division into scenes and even into acts—is another manifestation of the realism of the Shavian drama, and a new proof of the unity of ideas which has presided over its creation. By means of these physical and mental descriptions Shaw puts man back into real nature, into his proper environment, and indicates the physical and social causes which determine men's actions. He thus gives us a more exact picture of life.

Another outcome of these long and precise stage directions is that the actors are forced to enter into the very spirit of their parts, and are unable to play the author false. It becomes, I do not say impossible but certainly extremely difficult, for the actor to give to the character he is representing any other individuality than that intended by the author. Yet the directions as to intonation and gesture are not and cannot be given in a manner so detailed as to deprive the actor of all individual

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initiative. The indications are sufficient to limit the actor to a determinate rôle, rendered necessary by the character of the figure ; but there is plenty of scope left for varying shades of interpretation corresponding with the individual personality of the actor. The stage directions make it difficult for the author's idea to be misinterpreted and for the part to be falsely conceived, while the actors are forced to undertake a profound study of the mental state of the characters they have to represent, and for this reason they must themselves be of high intelligence and able really to understand their parts.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF BERNARD SHAW'S DRAMATIC METHOD—

(continued)

WE have now effected a careful analysis of Shaw's dramatic method, but before attempting a brief synthesis of this method it will be desirable to examine some of the plays more closely, to give their argument, their intellectual action, to study the conflicts of souls, passions, and ideas which they exhibit. We shall deal at especial length with *Candida*, one of the finest among so many fine plays. To *Candida* we devote special attention, not merely because it is a masterpiece but because it was the first to be played in the French tongue, having been staged at Brussels in 1907, and in Paris in 1908. This detailed examination of a number of the comedies will afford us a precise understanding of the author's manner, and will enable every one to effect for himself a true synthesis of Bernard Shaw's method.

The argument of *Widowers' Houses* comprises

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a number of demonstrations. (1) The exploitation of slum dwellings is a factor in the production of crime. (2) In the existing social order it is useful, for it renders services. (3) From the conventional point of view it is an immoral way of getting rich. (4) There exist pecuniary and matrimonial bonds between the exploiters of slum dwellings and the owners of what are called independent fortunes, who imagine that such sordid things as slums do not touch their own lives. (5) The respectability of the capitalist class and of the younger sons of the aristocracy is maintained by and fattened upon the poverty of the slums, like flies on dung. (6) The poor man who seeks for ease and wealth is an exploiter, just as much as the capitalist by whom he himself was formerly exploited. (7) In the existing social order it is inevitable that municipal improvement should give rise to sordid speculations.

Sartorius is the owner of the slum property. Lickcheese, employed by Sartorius, is subsequently dismissed because he does not bleed the poor tenants enough to satisfy his employer. After his dismissal, Lickcheese, enriched through speculating on underground knowledge of proposed governmental building operations and municipal improvements, becomes a man of business of equal importance with his former employer. Dr. Trench

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is a younger son, whose money is invested in a mortgage on the property of Sartorius. The latter has a daughter, Blanche, with whom Trench is in love and whom he marries at the end of the play. There is also a pauper aristocrat, Cokane, of parasitical type, an occasional secretary, slightly caricatured, who plays an important part in the development of the intellectual action. These characters, exhibiting the interaction of the various ideas enumerated above, are in conflict one with another. We see the love struggle between Trench and Blanche; the struggle between Sartorius and Trench concerning the sources of their wealth; between Lickcheese and Sartorius, the latter's desire to make money getting the better of his vanity, which is wounded because Lickcheese now deals with him on equal terms; between Sartorius and his daughter Blanche, whose character is but lightly sketched. We have also internal, purely mental, struggles: that of Trench, hesitating between his love, his romantic view of life, and life as it really is; that of Blanche, hesitating between her love, her sexual passion for Trench, and her wounded pride.

The central idea of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* may be stated as follows: "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is to please some man that can afford to be good to her."

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Around this central idea are grouped others: the explanation and the justification of the function of the procuress in existing capitalist society; the demonstration that the exploitation of women in Mrs. Warren's houses is no worse than the exploitation of men, women, and children in most factories, and that in some cases the comparison is to the detriment of the factories; the demonstration that in the existing social order the capitalist who invests his money in houses of prostitution does not act any more immorally than the capitalist whose money is invested in a weaving-mill or a white-lead factory; the demonstration that wealth is based upon the exploitation of human beings, that in capitalist society such exploitation is inevitable, and that we are all more or less involved in the matter.

The material action which serves for the framework of these demonstrations is melodramatic. Vivie, Mrs. Warren's daughter, refuses to enjoy her mother's fortune when she learns that this has been acquired by her mother as a procuress. Her refusal, however, is not occasioned by the conventional immorality by which the fortune has been gained, but because the idle life of the rich woman of the world does not suit the tastes of Vivie, who wishes to live as a working woman and to acquire an independence by her own exertions.

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The characters are : Mrs. Warren herself ; Vivie, her daughter ; Crofts, a man of family, a former lover of Mrs. Warren and a sleeping partner in her undertakings, who wishes to marry Vivie ; Frank Gardner, a young bourgeois, practical and positive-minded, but a spendthrift, in love with Vivie ; Frank's father, the Rev. Samuel Gardner, another of Mrs. Warren's old lovers ; Praed, an artist, living in dreams of his art instead of amid the realities of life.

All these characters, living intensely, produce by their reactions violent conflicts. There is a conflict between Mrs. Warren, the well-balanced woman of business, reasonable, tenacious, active, hard-working, and ambitious, but a sentimentalist who has lived one kind of life while dreaming of another—and Vivie, the true daughter of her mother, likewise well-balanced, reasonable, tenacious, active, hard-working, and ambitious, but stronger willed, positive, and realist, wishing to live a real life. There is a conflict between Vivie and Crofts, an elderly sensualist, still robust, maintaining the veneer of respectability, attracted by Vivie's youth and vigorous beauty. There is the conflict between Vivie and Frank, positive-minded but an idler, who wants a practical, sensible, and well-to-do woman for his wife, to enable him to continue his enjoyments as a gamester and a sports-

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man. There is the conflict between Frank and his father, the Rev. Samuel, who is authoritative, irritable, and weak-willed—in fine, somewhat ridiculous, and really under his son's influence.

From the abstract point of view, the intellectual action of the play indicates that good and evil do not exist absolutely. Mrs. Warren, in view of the circumstances of her life, has done well in being a procuress; Vivie, whose circumstances are different, would do ill to adopt this profession. The conflict between mother and daughter is the conflict between the romantic life with its traditional morality, and real life, life without conventions. The conflict between father and son, between mother and daughter, ending in the triumph of those of the younger generation, is the triumph of youth over age, of vigorous life in the ascendant phase over decrepit life on its way down to extinction. All these conflicts taken together manifest to us also a general conflict, that between capitalist society and a moral ideal altogether different from traditional morality, one which finds no overt expression, but which is felt to exist all through the play, to which it gives a high moralizing value.

Together with *The Philanderer*, the two plays here analysed comprise the series of three to which Bernard Shaw has given the name of *The Three Unpleasant Plays*, because the sociological topics



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they discuss are disagreeable. In these we have the author's gloomier manner, if I may use this term of plays which nevertheless induce laughter, for the laughter as it dies away leaves a bitter and even painful aftertaste.

Very different are *The Four Pleasant Plays*, so called because their subjects are agreeable. One of these is *Arms and the Man*, parodied by Oscar Strauss in a comic opera entitled *The Chocolate Soldier*, which obtained an enormous success. The main intellectual action of *Arms and the Man* is the exposition of certain mental peculiarities of the professional soldier, concretely exhibited in Bluntschli and Sergius. We have an exposition of the humdrum elements of military life, which is a profession just like another; we are shown that it is fear which wins battles, and that cowardice is a general human characteristic. For the material display of this intellectual action we have, besides Bluntschli, who is plain, intelligent, acute, positive-minded, realist, of lower middle-class origin, and Sergius, who is romantic, handsome, and of good family, Petkoff and Catherine and their daughter Raina, the last-named also romantically inclined. We are shown the romantic love-struggle of Sergius and Raina, who are betrothed, their romantic passion being overcome by the realist love, the purely sexual attraction which draws Raina and

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Bluntschli together ; and the love-struggle between Sergius and Louka the maidservant, who is beautiful, energetic, tenacious, proud, and practical. The development of these love-struggles leads to a conflict between the Petkoffs, father and mother, and their daughter Raina, in which the parents are held up more or less to ridicule, while youth, as usual, emerges the victor. In this play, however, the duel of the sexes assumes a peculiar form, which we find again and again in Shaw's plays. It is the woman who pursues the man, her assured prey, for ultimately Raina and Louka triumph in the possession of Bluntschli and of Sergius. Among these characters there moves a manservant, Nikola, who plays the part of confidant and is intimately associated with the intellectual action, of which again and again he draws the philosophical moral. His rôle in the play is analogous to that of Cokane in *Widowers' Houses* and to that of Praed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. He is the prototype of other characters which we shall encounter in many of the plays. The scene of *Arms and the Man* is laid in Bulgaria, but it might just as well take place in any other country.

The intellectual action of *You Never Can Tell* is to the effect that a sentimental and authoritative education must be replaced by a realist, scientific, and libertarian education ; by an education which

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gives instruction but never gives orders, which ignores respect and obedience, and which teaches human beings to will for themselves and to command themselves. The realist educationist is Mrs. Clandon, the heroine of the play. She is thoughtful, cautious, and well-balanced, of a frank and sincere temperament; she is separated from her husband, Mr. Crampton, who symbolizes sentimental education. Mrs. Clandon is one of the few mothers in the plays whom her children love, respect, and esteem. The effects of her realist method of education are embodied in the twins, Philip and Dolly, *enfants terribles*, lively, frank, outspoken, and sincere; and in their elder sister, Gloria, beautiful and charming, impassioned, and rational-minded. Valentine loves her and fascinates her, but proves to be a hunter caught in his own snare. He becomes the prey of Gloria, who is urged on irresistibly by the Life-Force, which, however, is not specifically mentioned in this play. The other characters are a solicitor, McComus, a man elderly and therefore shown to be a little ridiculous; Bohun, a distinguished barrister, a realist; Bohun's father, William, is head-waiter at the hotel where the action takes place, and the leading character in the play. William assists in the intellectual action by deducing the philosophy of the events, and in the material action by helping in the *dénouement*. The legal

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profession and the administration of justice are lightly satirized, and youth triumphs over age. We are also shown the struggle in Crampton's mind between his conventional opinions and his natural love as a father, springing to life at the sight of his children, whom he has not seen since the birth of the twins. There is further a struggle between Mrs. Clandon and her husband, taking the form of an argument against the legalized marriage bond, and of a demonstration that the sexual union should be freely entered and freely dissolved. Last of all we have the conflict in Gloria's mind between her impassioned temperament and the rational views that have been instilled by education.

The *Three Plays for Puritans*, so named because in them the heroes gain the victory over love, are *The Devil's Disciple*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. We shall give the argument of the first of these only.

Theological beliefs do not modify nature, which knows how to resume its rights; for the eyes of those who are able to see, conventional religion, the practice of ritual, religious appearances, do not really prevent the manifestation of natural sentiments; legal marriage does not create love and it does develop hypocrisy; the professional soldier cannot think, but is a machine for obedience; judgments are formed before reasons are examined;

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social and worldly conventions conceal the real things of life ; strength is to be gained from the contemplation of realities. Such are the leading ideas expounded in *The Devil's Disciple*.

The hero of the play is Richard Dudgeon, named the Devil's Disciple because he is liberated from all prejudices and all conventions ; in him there is a sketch of the Superman of whom we shall find a more detailed description in another play. In the various struggles of which he is the centre he incarnates the thought that the strong man is the one who sees the reality of things which is concealed by social, worldly, and religious conventions. An atheist, he is in conflict with his widowed mother, dictatorial, religious, apparently virtuous, hypocritical, grasping, hard, and pitiless. She has become what she is partly in consequence of marriage with a man whom she did not love, for she was in love with his brother, a ne'er-do-weel, a man of much the same type as his nephew, Richard. As an atheist, Richard Dudgeon is in conflict with the minister Anderson, frank, sincere, good, and compassionate, so little the priest by temperament that he throws aside his Bible to take up the sword of a citizen fighting for independence—the material action takes place in 1777, in America, during the War of Independence. An atheist, Richard offers up his life to save that of another, the minister,

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acting thus generously by instinct, and simply because he finds joy in the sacrifice, while the act inspires love for him in Judith, the minister's wife. She is a truly religious woman, not particularly intelligent, but impressionable, good, somewhat impassioned. In her we see a psychical conflict. Shall she give herself up to her love for Richard? Shall she avow her passion to him? Nature triumphs over her religious belief. She tells Richard she loves him, but Richard refuses to listen to her, triumphing over love in the desire for self-mastery. But his triumph is secured at the expense of an internal struggle of which we are given some glimpses.

In Judith's mind the struggle between conflicting aims takes the form of uncertainty whether she shall save Richard by sending her husband to his death, or whether she shall condemn Richard to death by saving her husband. In the end she tells the truth, which does not save Richard immediately, but leads to his ultimate rescue. There is a struggle between Judith and her husband, Anderson, who believes for a moment that Richard has possessed his wife by force, and who is not aware that Richard has been arrested in his own place; and in Anderson's mind there is a doubt whether he shall or shall not disclose to Judith the fact that he has become aware of the latter's state of

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mind, that he has recognized that she is falling in love with Richard. Richard, having been arrested, is tried by court-martial, first of all as the minister, but subsequently under his own name as the Devil's Disciple. He strips from the soldiers all the trappings which mask their true nature, a nature represented in flesh and blood by a Sergeant, by Major Swindon, and by General Burgoyne. Burgoyne's aristocratic insolence exhibits another aspect of the professional soldier, and its description furnishes also a fine satire of the man of the world. Richard, who knows that his case is really prejudged, and who does not hesitate to show his judges that he is aware of this, is in fact sentenced, and is about to be executed. The cord is already round Richard's neck when Anderson—now Captain Anderson, a Rebel officer in command of a company of American citizens—appears upon the scene and saves his own saviour. Other characters in the play are Christopher, Richard Dudgeon's brother, rather simple-minded, and Essie, little more than a child, natural daughter of Richard's ne'er-do-weel uncle. Essie is in love with her cousin Richard, and intervenes between Judith and Anderson, when Anderson is still unaware that Richard has been arrested by mistake for himself, and this intensifies the mental struggle in the soul of Judith. There are also a notary, and Uncle Titus and Uncle

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William, participating in a minor degree in the material action, but contributing to display the hypocrisy of the appearances which conceal the reality of things. As we have said, the scene is laid in America, but the incidents might occur just as well in any other part of the world.

*Man and Superman* was published in a separate volume, containing as a supplement *The Revolutionist's Handbook*, supposed to be written by the hero of the play, John Tanner. To the *Handbook* is appended a further supplement, entitled *Maxims for Revolutionists*. The piece contains four acts, but when it was staged a part of the first act and the whole of the third act were cut, leaving a three-act play. Later the third act of the original play was separately staged under the title of *A Dream: Don Juan in Hell*. Let us now briefly examine the subject of this philosophical comedy.

The intellectual action consists of two leading ideas: woman, aiming at maternity, pursues man, her certain prey; the superior man, the Superman, is the man who knows what he wants, and advances straight towards his goal, without concerning himself about conventions or about traditional morality. Around these two leading ideas quite a number of other ideas are grouped: legal marriage is purely conventional, and must be replaced by the free union; youth, which is energy and life,



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triumphs over old age, which is weakness and death ; old age is more or less ludicrous, for it typifies the past ; youth is beautiful and desirable, for it typifies the future ; the realist doctrine of anarchizing Socialism is the doctrine of to-day and of to-morrow, it is youth, energy, and life ; the romantic doctrine of Liberalism and Radicalism is the doctrine of yesterday, it is old age, weakness, and death ; the capitalist lives by exploiting the poor, while the thief lives by exploiting the rich ; in the relations between employer and employed, the professional group, the collective organization, plays a necessary and useful part ; the citizen of the United States is romantically minded, and in a state of civilization altogether inferior to that which prevails in England ; romanticism, which is a form of lying, poisons human life. . . . But I must pause in this enumeration, which would be too lengthy if I were to mention all the ideas expounded, defended, and discussed by the characters of this wonderful play, whose movement is so rapid that the reader and the spectator have no time to think about the profundity of the ideas. To get at the whole pith they must read it or see it again and again.

About a dozen characters are used to voice these rare thoughts and these truisms. The hero, John Tanner, M.I.R.C. (Member of the Idle Rich

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Class), a man in the prime of life, author of *The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion*, the Superman, strips men of their mask of prejudice, hypocrisy, and convention, and displays them as they really are. He understands the rôle of Woman, the hunter of men, driven by the irresistible impulsion of the Life-Force; hence he endeavours to escape from Ann, young, pretty, a dissembler, full of vitality, who desires him and him only in face of all odds, and who takes him forcibly for her own after a homeric chase in motor-cars. Leaving England in pursuit of Tanner, who has run away, she captures him at Granada. In the Sierra Nevada, made prisoner by ultra-modern brigands who hold up motor-cars, Tanner dreams that he is Don Juan in hell, where he converses with Doña Ana, the Statue of the Commander, and the Devil. This conversation is a marvel of wit, humour, and profundity. But let us return to earth, where Straker, Tanner's chauffeur, is the New Man, the trade unionist, dealing with his employer on equal terms, and sometimes even with ironical condescension. We have the Jew, Mendoza, formerly the keeper of a fashionable restaurant, but now a brigand chief; he also is the New Man, under a different visual angle. Straker, and to some extent also Mendoza, play the part played by Nikola in *Arms and the*

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*Man* and by William in *You Never Can Tell*; clear of sight, they assist in the unravelment of the plot, and draw more or less categorically the philosophical moral of the incidents and the ideas. We have Violet, a practical-minded young woman, secretly married to Hector Malone, a young American, whose father, a multi-millionaire, is, like all the fathers in Shaw's plays, dictatorial, testy, and in the end submissive. We have Roebuck Ramsden, Ann's guardian, an elderly Radical, rather absurd with his superannuated and romantic notions, cutting a melancholy figure beside the triumphant young people of advanced ideas, represented by Ann, Tanner, Violet, and Hector. We have Miss Ramsden, Roebuck Ramsden's sister, also testy and full of conventions. Finally, we have Octavius, poet and lover, scorned and made a mock of by Ann, who loves Tanner, desires him, and takes him; but this defeat of Octavius the lover is the triumph of Octavius the poet, just as the defeat of Eugene the lover in *Candida* is the triumph of Eugene the poet.

In *Man and Superman* we witness the struggle between Tanner and Ann, victory being with Ann, who symbolizes the Life-Force. The defeat of Octavius is another form of the triumph of the Life-Force, for the poet must live without a wife in order to teach the world to think and to feel.

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We witness the struggle between Tanner and Ramsden, seeing the triumph of the former—the embodied Superman, the man without conventions, who sees the reality of things, who is Socialist because individualist, because anarchist—over Ramsden, who is the concrete expression of the bourgeois of our day, a Radical, enmeshed in convention, desirous of hiding the realities of life beneath a veil of romance. Finally, we witness the struggle between Hector Malone and his father, ending in the defeat of old age by youth.

Such is the argument of this magnificent play, philosophical and profoundly revolutionary, which proved so shocking to American pharisaism that in certain libraries the book was withheld from the free use of the public. The attacks against society, it was held, might be misinterpreted by the young.

It is a remarkable fact that *Candida*, one of the *Four Pleasant Plays*, whose meaning is so clear, has not been understood by the great majority of critics in England or elsewhere. This failure of understanding must depend on causes foreign to the play itself, for, let me repeat, the clarity of *Candida*, as of all Bernard Shaw's plays, is extreme. If it bears "a Mystery" as a sub-title, this is merely because at the end of the play the poet goes away with a secret which is a mystery for Candida

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and her husband. But before we examine the reasons of the critics' failure to understand *Candida*, let us give the argument of this fine play.

The following ideas constitute the intellectual action. What binds a man and a woman together is not legal marriage, but love. Virtue and purity are conventions which do not arrest the play of the instincts, and to act according to our instincts is necessary. Moral force is greater than physical force. Woman dominates man, domesticates him. Woman's love is a love tinged by motherhood. The poet's mission is a more elevated one than the attainment of domestic happiness. The artist, the creator, is like woman, and cannot be domesticated. The Socialist ideal triumphs over the capitalist ideal. The poetic ideal is vaguer, more remote from realization, than the Socialist ideal, and if the former is in certain respects inferior to the latter it is also in certain respects superior; neither of these two ideals triumphs over the other. Woman, man's social equal, is her own mistress. No occupation is base or inferior *per se*. True strength is to be found in a clear view of the reality of things, after the veils of convention and prejudice have been stripped off. Lying is a cause of weakness. Love—that is to say, sexual attraction—is the universal desire. Youth is the future, it is life; old age is the past, it is death. Upon

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those endowed with moral strength suffering has a fortifying influence. Wealth is based upon the exploitation of the workers. Justice and beauty—that is to say, the apostle and the poet—make the world greater, thanks to the help of woman.

Six characters represent these ideas. Candida, the heroine, thirty-three years of age, is commonplace from the intellectual point of view, but has a great soul, is eminently intuitive, reading others' minds, and seeing things naked, just as they are in their pure reality; she is absolutely emancipated from prejudices and conventions. Morell, Candida's husband, a man over forty, is of vigorous physique, intelligent, cultivated, lively, but not of particularly fine fibre either in body or in mind; he is comfortably established as incumbent of a large East End parish. Eugene Marchbanks, of a refined and delicate temperament, but nervous to the verge of the morbid, physically a weakling, but endowed with moral strength, intuitive because a poet, extremely timid, exhibiting a mingling of childlike and of serious or rather profound characteristics, is eighteen years old. Proserpine, an unmarried woman of about thirty, is Morell's typist; she is intelligent, brisk, and somewhat irritable. Lexy Mill, Morell's curate, has no marked character of his own, and models himself upon Morell. Last of all we have Burgess, Candida's father, a

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bourgeois of sixty, a well-to-do man of business, coarse-minded, vulgar, and ignorant, vain of his wealth, which he has acquired as a contractor in municipal undertakings by the shameless exploitation of his workmen.

Among these characters conflicts arise. There is a struggle between Morell, who symbolizes Christian Socialist idealism, and is clear-sighted, bold, sure of himself, sensible, a man who takes short views; and Eugene, who symbolizes poetic idealism, and is lofty-spirited, a lover of beauty, but vague and confused in his mind. There is a struggle between Burgess, in whose personality we have a concrete representation of capitalism, of the bourgeois ideal of our time, a narrow-minded man, summing up everything in terms of money, thoroughly satisfied with the world as it is with all its social inequalities; and Morell, a concrete representation of the Socialist idealism which will be a reality to-morrow, a man of broad and elevated views, delighting in equality and justice. There is no struggle between Burgess and Eugene, for Burgess is quite incapable of understanding Eugene, who incorporates the poetic ideal. The two are so remote from one another that mutual comprehension is impossible.

The material action is simple. In the peaceful household of the Morells there is received as a

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friend of the family a young poet, Eugene Marchbanks, no more than a big baby, so far does he live from the realities of life. Eugene loves Candida, and tells her husband so. Morell, after a preliminary impulse to turn Eugene out of the house, recognizing the uselessness of forcible methods, wishes Candida to make her choice between himself and Eugene. Candida chooses her husband, and Eugene goes out into the night. This extremely simple material action exhibits to us several kinds of love: Morell's love for Candida, egoistic, narrow, and sexual; Eugene's love for Candida, ideal, romantic, and ethereal, the love he feels for a visionary Candida rather than for the real Candida of flesh and blood; the love of Proserpine for Morell, a sexual adoration. These various kinds of love, as they develop and take definite shape, give rise to intense spiritual dramas. Morell, Marchbanks, and Proserpine suffer, and we witness their internal struggles. Candida's soul remains serene. In her there is no internal struggle.

Some critics see in Eugene a Don Juan, others a Julien Sorel, and yet others a Chérubin. But Eugene has absolutely nothing in common either with Don Juan or with Julien Sorel. The literary figure he most closely resembles, though not to the point of identity, is that of Chérubin, whose love for the Countess presents much analogy with



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that of Eugene for Candida. Other critics have been extremely pleased with the *dénouement*, gratified by the fact that Candida stays with her husband, obeying the voice of duty in an extremely moral manner. Here, they tell us, the traditional ideal, after all, proves victorious over the new ideal that is symbolized by Nora in *A Doll's House*. It need hardly be said that this view is totally wrong-headed. Candida does not stay with her husband in obedience to the voice of duty. She does not care a bit about the voice of duty, for she is a realist, without prejudices, and freed from all conventions. In her view, duty, purity, and virtue are prejudices. She stays with her husband because she loves him and not Eugene. She says this very clearly: "Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons—mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day."

Candida has been compared with Nora, and also with Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*. This comparison, which arises solely from a similarity in external circumstances, in the act of choice, is really quite unmeaning. Candida is not in the least like one of Ibsen's heroines; she is not a woman trying to find herself, a woman seeking emancipation; she *is* an emancipated woman, one who *has* found herself. She does not, like Ellida, ask her husband

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to set her free ; and she has no need, like Nora, to go away in order to obtain freedom, for she has already freed herself, by discarding social conventions and religious, worldly, and other prejudices.

Many French critics have seen in this comedy a play essentially English, very remote from the French manner. Some tell us that it depicts the vices of English society, whilst others say that it is a sermon on English morality with its enthusiasm for truth. These interpretations of *Candida* are amusing, for they show how ignorant are our critics of what was thought of *Candida* in England and in the States. Equally in England and in America the play shocked the great mass of critics just as much as it shocked the critics in France—critics whose ideas are ruled by convention. But those of England, familiar with English society, did not regard *Candida* as a picture of that society. The sincerity, the frankness of all the characters, showing themselves as they really are, produced as great a shock in England as it produced in France ; for English traditional morality is, if possible, even more hypocritical than traditional morality in France. It is evident that the persons of the drama move in an English environment ; but to translate the scene to another land would require no more than trifling changes, the characters

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and the ideas they voice remaining unaltered. The characters and the ideas are broadly and profoundly human, and it is an error to assert that they are English and not French. The play is impregnated with an intense humanity, unaffected by nationality. To make this perfectly clear it is essential, when staging the play in a foreign tongue, to deprive it, as far as is possible without breaking the environmental harmony, of all English colouring. Scenery, names, and pronunciation must be denationalized.

This denationalization, which is requisite to the foreign staging of all Shaw's plays, was effected for *Candida* at the Théâtre du Parc in Brussels, but it was not effected at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris. This may in part explain why the French critics erred in their judgment of the play, while those of Belgium understood it very well.

Eugene is by no means the typically English æsthete, any more than *Candida* symbolizes the twentieth-century Englishwoman. Eugene's chief characteristic is the profundity of his intuition. This is the essential characteristic of the poet, to whatever country he may belong. Eugene is the poet, "the eternal incarnation," as René Ghil wrote to me, "of the inevitable and uneasy aspirations of humanity." As for his timidity, this is not peculiar to the young English poet, for it is found just as much in the poets of other lands, and I

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could mention French poets and Belgian who were or are just as timid as Eugene. Candida symbolizes the New Woman, liberated from all conventionality, without prejudices, frank and sincere, with her gaze fixed on the reality of things. This is what she symbolizes, and not a woman belonging to one nationality rather than another. Because Candida is the wife of a clergyman it has been inferred by some that she must be a Christian, that her thoughts and actions are influenced by religious belief. This notion is altogether erroneous. Candida has completely discarded all religious prejudices. For her sermons are "mere phrases," made to deceive, but which do not deceive her. She sees plainly the void which really exists behind religion, so that Morell, touched to the quick by one of her illuminative utterances, exclaims, "What dreadful, what soul-destroying cynicism!" Candida, then, is by no means a Christian.

Because Candida is English, and because she does not speak of her love in romantic terms, some have supposed that the sexual factor plays no part in her life. This view is mistaken. What takes place is not precisely what would happen if we had to do with a mother deciding between two of her children, for Candida loves her husband. She is drawn to him by his physique, his strength, his vigour, his mentality. Between Candida and Morell

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there is a sexual attraction, a sexual affinity, which does not exist between Candida and Eugene. Candida's love for Eugene is like that of a mother, and it is nothing more ; but she loves her husband with a love which is at once sexual and maternal. For her, Morell is at the same time a child and a man, the man who procreates her children. Candida, therefore, is not either specifically English or specifically Northern ; she is, like many other women, a woman who experiences joy in making happy one whom she loves. This need to provide for the happiness of the loved one is the need the mother feels in the case of her children. This is a manifestation of the maternal sentiment. Candida is the mother-woman. She is the creature of her own natural physiological function, motherhood. Like the mother-woman, she is Strength in relation to her children, Morell and Eugene. She is Strength because she is candid, straightforward, simple-minded, unprejudiced, free from the hypocritical conventions imposed by education and civilization. But the weaker of her two children is Morell, for Morell's mind is still clouded by a mass of prejudices. " Oh, you are a clergyman, James—a thorough clergyman," she says to him—that is to say, you believe in a great number of non-existent things, in empty words, with which you deceive yourself. Morell fails to understand,

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and this makes Candida say: "Eugene's right. . . . He understands you; he understands me; he understands Prossy; and you, James! you understand nothing!" Eugene, in fact, is liberated from many prejudices and many conventions. This is shown by his dress, his gestures, and his thoughts; but he is still under the dominion of prejudice and convention, for he is romantic, and lives in a dream. Hence Eugene is weak, when compared with Candida, the realist—Candida, the opponent of romance, who pitilessly insists that her feet would not be beautiful on the Hackney Road without boots.

When, at the end of the play, Eugene goes out into the night he does not go in despair, as Morell believes, for a moment, and as many critics have believed. Listening to Candida's description of her life with Morell, Eugene has suddenly discovered that his own destiny calls him to a loftier sphere than this narrow region of domestic happiness. He has discovered his own strength, his true path in life. He sees the work he has to build up; he is the Poet, who must enlighten the world as to its goal, and must teach men to think and feel nobly. When he goes out into the night, it is the enchanted night of the Poet, night veiling the pettiness of social life, and creating a huge firmament of mysterious and impenetrable regions of space.

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His soul is freed. His pride is immense. Candida, the little bourgeoisie whose soul is great because she is the mother-woman, is no longer the woman he loves, but the woman he has loved. . . . His love has disappeared, and this has caused him suffering, for the loss of our illusions is always a painful process. Candida's description of her domestic happiness has shown Eugene the reality of things. He no longer sees Candida as he used to see her, no longer as an ethereal and supra-terrestrial being; he sees her as she is, a good little woman, petting her husband, her big baby, and the children she has had by him. But through the dispersion of this illusion Eugene has gained strength, for to see the reality of things, to free our minds from lying, strengthens us.

In Morell's case, also, an illusion is dissipated; he believed himself to be the protector of his wife, and he finds that the case is the precise opposite of this. Obtaining a truer view of things than he had before, he is consequently stronger than before; he has been emancipated from the thralldom of a lie, from his prejudice as to the moral superiority of man over woman, and for this reason he has gained strength. But though he is stronger than before, he needs, for the accomplishment of his apostolic task as preacher of the Christian Socialist ideal, the gentle and tranquilly happy atmosphere

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created around him by his wife, who pets and coddles him as a mother her child. Experiencing this need, he is weaker than Eugene, who for his part has another aim in life, that of the Poet. To fulfil this aim, to be able to teach humanity to think and feel nobly, Eugene must walk alone. Domestic happiness would interfere with the fulfilment of his task, would destroy in him "the holy spirit of man—the god within him," as Morell phrases it. Candida, the mother-woman, by her refusal to go with Eugene, helps him to accomplish his task as Poet, assisting at the birth of the poet within him. Towards Eugene, as towards Morell, she plays the mother's part. Eugene is not unhappy when he goes out into the night. Indeed, he goes to happiness; but it is the happiness of the Poet and not that of the domestic life, for to him life is a nobler thing than domestic happiness.

Wrong, therefore, are the critics who declare that the *dénouement* of *Candida* shocks our ideas of justice, equity, and compensation. The *dénouement* is appropriate and well-balanced. All have the happiness which they need, which is adequate to their respective natures. Morell receives the petty and narrow happiness of hearth and home; Eugene the intense happiness of the creator who, amid suffering, gives birth to the children of his



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fancy; Candida, the intense happiness of being a mother, mother to Morell, the apostle, and mother to Eugene, the poet. One critic tells us that the central idea of this *dénouement* is that "habit creates a right by the very fact that it has created a need." The habit of domestic happiness has created for Morell a right to this happiness, while the habit of domestic unhappiness has created for Eugene a right to continue to be unhappy. It is to illustrate this idea, we are told, that Shaw makes Candida choose her husband.

The notion is original, but displays ignorance of Shaw's philosophy. For Bernard Shaw, right is a prejudice, a social convention and not a reality. What is real is need. It is because Morell needs a softly padded environment, while Eugene needs to live alone, that Candida, the intuitive woman, gives what she gives to one and to the other.

Whilst the majority of the critics have regarded the scene of the choice as the culmination, the dramatic climax, of the play, there is a minority which holds other views, on the ground that "a woman's liberty is no more than apparent, for woman, nominally free to choose, is hardly ever really free to choose sincerely and in accordance with the dictates of her own heart." As far as Candida is concerned, this way of looking at the matter is erroneous. Her liberty is not apparent

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but real, for she gives it to herself, takes it for herself. She does not feel herself tied to her husband by any bond, legal or religious; for these ideas she regards as mere prejudices. To her, law and religion are empty words, which may deceive others but not herself. Thus she is, in reality, perfectly free. I use the term "free" in the social sense, for naturally Candida is determined. She is free to choose sincerely, in accordance with her heart, her instincts. She remains with Morell, not because he is her legal husband, but because she loves him, because he exercises upon her a sexual attraction. In staying with Morell, she acts in accordance with her own nature, which is to be a mother, to procreate children who will be strong and healthy because they are the children of a strong and healthy father. This is the idea on which all Shaw's plays are pivoted: nature always has the victory over all the conventions, whether social, worldly, or religious. As one critic has admirably expressed it, Candida is sincerity made woman, and therefore her choice is absolutely sincere. It is this sincerity which makes her tell her husband to trust in her love, and not in her virtue or her purity, for virtue and purity are empty words. Her declaration that she has no regard for any conventional bond is a powerful attack on legal marriage—involves, in fact, its demolition.

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From the point of view of the material action, I consider that the culminating point and emotional climax of the play is the scene of Candida's choice. In reality, however, it seems to me that there are several distinct dramatic moments. For Candida, the choice does not exist *in reality*. Let us recall the following passage :—

CANDIDA. Oh ! I am to choose, am I ? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.

MORELL. Quite. You must choose definitely.

MARCHBANKS. Morell, you don't understand. She means she belongs to herself.

CANDIDA. I mean that, and a good deal more. . . .

Candida's meaning is that she belongs to herself, that she is free ; free to stay with her husband, free to go away alone, or free to accompany Eugene. Her husband cannot *compel* her to choose, for this is beyond his power. To Candida, the choice which her husband wishes her to make does not signify that she must resign herself to belong to one or the other, for she knows herself to be free, free because she has taken freedom into her own hands. The choice imposed upon her by her husband, and which she seems to agree to make, does not really exist for her. She resigns herself to this appearance of choice, to this conventionality of possession, because she knows that her husband does not understand that if she is with

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him it is because she loves him. This love of Candida for Morell, pre-existent to the scene of the choice, determines her decision without its being really necessary for her to listen to the rival bidders. The act of choice is no more than apparent. Her decision, dictated by her love, is predetermined. But though no more than an appearance for Candida, it is a reality for Morell and for Eugene, who endure, while it is making, a moment of agonizing suspense. Neither of them knows how Candida will decide, for both of them are blinded by their prejudices, which render them unable to see the reality of things. They have not recognized that Candida loves her husband profoundly, alike sensually and maternally, as profoundly as he loves her.

Morell, however, is not aware that his love for Candida is not the love of one being for another being, but merely a form of self-love. What Morell loves in Candida is the way in which she lavishes care upon him, the way in which she spoils and coddles him, padding for him the sharp angles of life. Eugene, for his part, has not recognized that Candida really does love Morell. He fails to recognize it because the Candida he loves is not the real woman but the woman of his dreams, Candida barefooted on the mountains. Thus, though he understands her to some extent, he does not under-

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stand her fully, being blinded by his romantic conceptions. He believes that Candida is secretly unhappy, that she suffers as he suffers himself from the commonplaces of life with Morell. He is mistaken, as those critics are mistaken who have also believed that Candida's life with Morell makes her secretly unhappy. Candida is happy, *genuinely* happy, in her humdrum life, for she loves her husband. What has deceived Eugene is the fact that he does not see Candida as she is, but as he imagines her to be ; what has deceived the critics is the fact that Candida, like all the other characters, is perfectly sincere, while we are habituated to lying. So general is lying, that no one will believe you when you speak the truth. So true is this statement that a critic has been found to make the following false assertion, that "all the characters in the play lack sincerity."

All that a number of the critics have seen in *Candida* is its external aspect, its plot. To such persons it naturally seems a trifling and puerile plot, greatly spun-out, since three acts are required to explain why Candida does not become Eugene's mistress. The pith and marrow of the play, the mass of thought it conveys, has eluded them. They have seen and heard without understanding, because, like Morell, they are blinded by prejudices and conventions.

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Dominated by the conventions of the contemporary drama, and regarding these conventions as irrefragable laws, they have considered nothing but the material action of the play, and it is inevitable that much should have escaped their attention. They recognize, for example, the profound truths uttered by Eugene on the subject of love and timidity, in the excellent scene with Proserpine at the beginning of the second act. But this they regard as an episode merely, outside the main current of the play. "Now," they tell us "the action is resumed." No, the action is not resumed, for it has been in progress all through this scene between Eugene and Proserpine. The action of the play is not to be found in the question whether Candida will or will not become the mistress of Eugene; this is mere framework. The true action is to be found in the concrete representation, in the persons of the characters, of different conceptions of love, and in the struggles that are the outcome of these different loves.

With two or three exceptions, the French critics have not grasped the importance of Burgess. They have overlooked the struggle between Burgess and Morell. They have failed to understand that this character, who passes through the play without seeing anything of the spiritual crises in Morell and Eugene, who understands nothing in the actions

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and the logical thoughts of Candida, Eugene, Morell, and Proserpine, and who therefore thinks them all mad, is extremely important. He is introduced, not only because he symbolizes the contemporary bourgeois who sees nothing but money, and who sets his face against Socialism with its ideals of justice and of equality, but also because he is the symbol of the bourgeois who is permeated with prejudices and blinded by conventions. It is inevitable that to him, in the exposition of motives, all sincerity and all frankness should appear insane, and this is why he explains that all the others are mad. By this assertion, not only does he create in the play an atmosphere of indulgence for the ultra-logical reasoners who are liberated from all tradition, but he also creates an atmosphere which illuminates by contrast those wiser than himself, whom, he, coarse-grained, thick-headed, and common, calls mad. It is for this very reason that the character of Burgess must be made thoroughly coarse-grained, common, and thick-headed. It is for this very reason that he must exhibit these characteristics to a degree verging upon caricature. The more violent the contrast with the others, with those who are mad, the more will his character be in harmony with the intellectual action, for the more clearly will it appear that those whom he calls mad are truly wise. To make Burgess a cultured,

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refined, and delicate-minded bourgeois, would be to sin against reason and good taste. In playing his part, care must be taken to avoid attenuating his characteristics, which have been deliberately accentuated by the author in conformity with a logical conception of the intellectual action of the play.

The burlesque character of Burgess emphasizes the moral of the play. The more absurd and the more stupid he appears, the wiser do those appear whom he regards as mad. This endows the whole play with a comic note, which is lacking if Burgess's part is itself played in the key of elevated and refined comedy. This was clearly displayed by the differences between the representation of *Candida* in Paris and in Brussels. At the Théâtre du Parc Burgess's part was conceived as the author had designed; he was coarse-grained, common, thick-headed, and ignorant; his speech was made the counterpart of the original Cockney; even his physical appearance was burlesque. In Paris, on the other hand, at the Théâtre des Arts, he was wrongly interpreted, presented as a bourgeois practically free from coarseness and vulgarity; there was no element of burlesque in his physique or in his gestures; and his speech was in practical harmony with that of the cultured environment in which he moved. His character was heavily comi-



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cal, and failed to exhibit the burlesque comedy of Molière. The consequence was that Candida, Morell, and Eugene seemed figures of tragedy, instead of the figures of comedy rightly presented at the Théâtre du Parc. The false interpretation of Burgess's part necessarily involved a false interpretation in the parts of the other characters, so true is it that the character of Burgess is the one which really illumines all the rest.

This transformation of burlesque into elevated and tedious comedy, which was effected in Paris and not in Brussels, was certainly one of the reasons why the Parisian critics so generally failed to understand the play. The reason of their failure was more or less evident to themselves, for quite a number of them expressed the belief that the interpretation of the play must have failed to some extent to represent all that was in the mind of the author. This was the true explanation. At the Théâtre des Arts the performers played with much talent, but in a wrong key. They were in the tragic instead of in the comic vein; and the bursts of laughter among the audience, which occurred irresistibly, so powerful is the element of comedy, seemed nevertheless out of harmony with what was going on upon the stage. To some of the critics, whose minds were fixed on the grandeur of the ideas voiced by the characters, the laughter of the audience

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seemed idiotic. Just as idiotic had seemed to me the unrestrained laughter of the Brussels audience at the first performance of *Candida* in French. It was not, however, the laughers, but myself and the critics who were the idiots. The whole play is food for laughter. We must laugh at the doings, at the gestures, at the words, of Burgess, Proserpine, and Lexy. We must laugh at the doings, at the states of mind, and at the gestures of Eugene; we must smile, sometimes laugh, at those of Candida and Morell. Eugene's sufferings, intense as they are, provoke laughter, loud laughter. The audience laughs at Eugene's distresses because they seem disproportionate to their cause—as many laugh at the suffering of a child with a broken toy. It seems to the onlooker that there is a want of harmony between the cause and the effect, and the contrast induces laughter. In Shaw's work the comedy is so intense that it is impossible for any one of his plays to be put out of tune by the laughter of the audience, which can never laugh at the wrong time. It does not matter when we laugh, we shall always be in tune with the mind of the author, for, like Figaro, he laughs at everything. What is capable of spoiling the setting of one of Shaw's plays is to present a scene of comedy in the tragic vein, for we must not do this even when we are concerned with something fundamentally tragic,

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such as intense pain. It was this introduction of a tragic note into the comedy with which the entire play is permeated that led the majority of French critics to fail to appreciate the comedy of *Candida*; whereas in Belgium there was no misunderstanding on the part of the critics, for here the interpretation was in the true vein of comedy, just as it had been in Germany, the United States, England, and Scandinavia, where the play had such a gigantic success. If some found *Candida* obscure, confused, dull, and tedious, this was largely due to the erroneous interpretation of the play upon the stage. The error of interpretation increased the sense of lost bearings which is always apt to be induced in those who see one of Shaw's plays for the first time, induced by the fact that his dramatic method involves so complete a breach with the traditions of the stage since the days of Scribe.

It is possible that my analysis of *Candida* may have seemed unduly lengthy. I hope not, however, for in this chapter, in addition to giving brief analyses of the intellectual and material action of some of the other plays, I have been able, in my detailed analysis of *Candida*, to show the whole anatomy of the Shavian drama. By this process of dissection has been revealed the inmost essence of Shaw's dramatic works, which are magnificent because they are so extremely amusing and because at the same time they are so profound.

## CHAPTER V

### SHAW AND THE DRAMATIC CRITICS. TECHNIQUE OF THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA. THE NATURE OF DRAMATIC ART

#### I. SHAW'S PLAYS AND THE DRAMATIC CRITICS

BERNARD SHAW'S plays appear to constitute a new dramatic system, and this fact has armed against him the critics of every country in which his work has been staged. His success, in fact, has been attained in spite of the critics. They wrote : Shaw is laughing at the public ; he is a clown, a buffoon ; he discharges fireworks simply for the sake of notoriety ; his success is the outcome of pandering to morbid curiosity ; his sole aim is to make money by an appeal to the gallery—and so on, and so on. All this merely goes to prove how complete is the lack of understanding of the ordinary critic when presented with works of genius, with works that are beautiful, great, original—and also accordant with the traditions of the stage, although discordant with the tradition of Scribe.

What has been, what is, the cause of this failure

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to understand? Shaw himself tells us that the hostility to his work exhibited by most of the critics was due to the fundamental discord between their romantic morality and the realist morality of the plays. This is perfectly true, and it has been frankly admitted by a French critic, Augustin Filon, who writes : " Shaw's success seems to me a cause for uneasiness, for all his plays are a campaign against our ancient institutions." It is evident that this categorical statement is an expression of the truth that the writer's own romantic traditional morality conflicts with the realist morality of the plays. To him, as to many of my fellow-countrymen, the realist morality has seemed *immoral*. It seems to them immoral to brush away illusions, to strip away appearances and conventional masks, and to expose things truthfully, in their pure and naked reality. The critics do not merely regard lying as the natural atmosphere of social life (to quote M. Palante's expression), but as an atmosphere which really *ought* to be there. Hence they disagree profoundly with Bernard Shaw, who regards lying as a mephitic exhalation which corrupts the natural atmosphere of social life, enfeebles the individuals taking part in that life, and consequently enfeebles the community at large. While the critics assure us that the social being ought to lie to others and to himself, Shaw affirms

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that he should be sincere, frank, disillusioned, without hypocrisy, without conventions, and without prejudices—free, and therefore strong.

It is obvious that the critics hold views for the most part absolutely opposed to those of Shaw. Hence it need not astonish us that they regard his morality as immoral. To them his characters seem heartless, unprincipled, ill-behaved. From their own point of view they are perfectly right. From the bourgeois outlook it is clear that such characters as Vivie, Gloria, the Twins, Sylvia, Richard Dudgeon, Tanner, and many others are extremely ill-behaved, that they are heartless and unprincipled. With good reason do those of the characters who symbolize contemporary bourgeois society, such as Crampton, Burgess, Mrs. Dudgeon, Colonel Craven, Catherine Petkoff, and Mrs. Warren, complain that their children are heartless and unprincipled. From Shaw's own point of view, however, from his particular philosophic outlook, which is shared by other Socialist and Anarchist thinkers, these children are neither heartless nor unprincipled—their principles and their emotional life are merely different from what is pleasing to the conventionally-minded bourgeois. They are not ill-behaved, but their behaviour differs from that of others, because they have been differently brought up; and for those who think

with Shaw, their education is preferable to the ordinary education of our day, which produces men and women stuffed with prejudice, convention, lying, and hypocrisy.

There is thus an absolute disharmony between the critics of the conventional bourgeois stamp and the revolutionary-minded Shaw. But this disharmony, which is a matter of ideas and of morality, does not suffice to explain all the criticisms that have been levelled against the plays.

We are told that Shaw lacks originality, and that his criticism of society is no more than a repetition of that made by Ibsen and by Hauptmann. Even if this were true, I do not consider that it would afford a matter for reproach. But it is altogether untrue. Shaw's criticism of capitalist society, as embodied in his plays, is not borrowed from Ibsen or from Hauptmann, for we find the first rough sketch of this criticism in Shaw's novels, which antedate Hauptmann's plays. The latter's first play appeared in 1889, his *Weavers* in 1892. (We may note in passing that Shaw is six years older than Hauptmann.) Shaw's novels date from 1880 to 1883, and were therefore written prior to the introduction of Ibsen's plays into England, when Shaw first made their acquaintance.

The Shavian philosophy, based upon the conception of the Life-Force, is to be found neither

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in Ibsen nor in Hauptmann. With Hauptmann, Shaw shares his Socialist criticism ; and with Ibsen his hatred of lying, hypocrisy and authority, his individualism, his anarchism. But these ideas were independently present in Shaw's mind just as much as in those of Ibsen and of Hauptmann, as in those of numerous other writers and thinkers of the period. As a typical example of the general diffusion of these ideas at the time the following fact may be mentioned. In London, in the year 1894, Shaw was depicting the professional soldier in *Arms and the Man* and in *The Man of Destiny*. Now, a few months earlier, in November, 1893, I published in Paris my *Psychologie du Militaire Professionnel*. We expressed the same ideas, at times almost in the same words. I wrote, for example : " To sum up the matter, the soldier's trade is a trade just like any other, and is practised just like any other " ; while Shaw makes Petkoff say : " However, I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade." I am certain that Shaw did not directly borrow this idea. It was in the air, and that is why it found expression simultaneously in London and in Paris.

The plays of Shaw, like those of Hauptmann and of Ibsen, are permeated with Socialism and Anarchism because at this time the fundamental ideas of Socialism and Anarchism were ferment-



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ing in the brains of almost all original writers. The proof of this is afforded by the works that were then being published all over the world. Moreover, we have seen that as early as 1879 Shaw began to take an active interest in English politics, that he was a Socialist propagandist and was acquainted with William Morris. Living in this Socialist and individualist environment, participating in its ideas, it was logically necessary that his comedies should embody a satire of society from the Socialist and individualist point of view. It would have been astonishing had it been otherwise.

“The psychology of the characters,” the critics assure us, “is altogether superficial, if it be not utterly erroneous, as when the author is dealing with the psychology of foreign races. As a rule, the characters are mere rough sketches, not finished pictures; they are not alive, but are marionettes, all exactly alike, for they are nothing more than Shaw himself in different dresses.” These critics are right so far as concerns the psychology of foreign races, and it is true that Shaw’s own personality appears in almost all his characters; but they are wrong when they say that the characters are not alive, and that they are mere sketches instead of finished pictures. It suffices to see any play of Shaw’s on the stage, or to

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read it with its lengthy stage directions describing the mental states of the characters, to enable us to recognize how intensely alive is every one of his figures. So little are any of them lifeless marionettes that he tells us all that makes the figures move, exposing with perfect sincerity the motives of their actions and of their thoughts. The characters are even more alive than is natural, in this sense, that in the ordinary life of the world the true motives of action are concealed beneath a varnish of conventions and of prejudices, whereas in Shaw's plays this varnish has been removed, and the figure appears naked, exhibiting its natural ugliness and its natural beauty. It is this natural nakedness which has deceived the critics. When they see figures that are living, but naked, instead of being clothed like those we see around us every day, they take them for marionettes. Most of the persons of the drama are, moreover, characters finished in detail, and women are rarely painted with a firmer touch than his. The error arises from a superficial perusal or a superficial view of the plays, and is doubtless dependent on the fact that many of the male characters are somewhat exaggerated, are to a certain extent caricatures. But it is by the necessities of the comedian's art that they take this form, for that art deals with the general, has a moral bearing, and must consequently symbolize social or physical entities.

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It is clear that if in the characters of *Arms and the Man*, *Cæsar and Cleopatra*, or *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*, for example, we imagine it to have been Bernard Shaw's intention to depict for us characteristic types of the Bulgarian, the Roman, the Egyptian, the Moroccan, we must agree with the critics that the types are falsely conceived. But it was by no means Shaw's intention to deal with the national psychology of Bulgaria, of Rome, or of Egypt. All he wanted to do was to describe human beings; and according as his fancy happened to roam he has placed these human beings in Bulgaria, Egypt, Italy, or Morocco, without troubling to describe the specific characteristics of race or nationality. The only cases in which he has wished to do this is as far as the English, the Irish, and the Americans are concerned, and by universal consent, not excepting that of those who decry his plays, he has here succeeded to perfection.

It is true that Shaw's own individuality is displayed in a great many of the characters, as evidently, for example, in those of Don Juan, Morell, Candida, Mrs. Clandon, Bohun, Tanner, Straker, Bluntschli, Laurence, Doyle, Cæsar, Richard Dudgeon, Sir Patrick, Dubedat, etc.; nevertheless all these characters are intensely alive. Nevertheless, they are characters or types differ-

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ing from Shaw, though each of them exhibits certain psychical characteristics which are seen in Shaw himself. Surely it must be admitted that Shaw is not so perfectly unique as to render it impossible that other human beings should display mental characteristics similar to his? That this should happen is not merely possible and probable, but inevitable. Hence, in actual fact, what the critic has regarded as a portrait of Shaw is nothing more than a display of the specific mental characteristics of the perpetual rebel, of the Socialist, of the Anarchist—mental characteristics which the present writer has defined in one of his own writings, *La Psychologie de l'Anarchiste Socialiste*.

While projecting into his characters a portion of himself, Shaw depicts for us social and professional types. If he puts something of himself into these, it is because he is forced to do so by the technical necessities of his art. Comedy generalizes and moralizes; it has therefore an educative aim which is lacking in the case of tragedy. The Comic dramatist is necessarily a moralist, a teacher, just as much as the professor in the lecture-theatre or the parson in the pulpit. The theatre, let us never forget, is his church, or the school in which he teaches. Owing to his rôle as moralist, the comic dramatist is forced to

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put himself upon the stage. He has to express his own way of looking at things, his own interpretation of the events of life. It is for this reason that Aristophanes expresses his opinions by the mouth of the chorus; while Molière, Le Sage, Beaumarchais, whose plays have no chorus, borrow the voice of one or more of their characters in order to present their own ideas to the public. With good reason, therefore, the critics point out that in Shaw's plays one or more of the characters voice merely the idea, the opinions, or the fantasies of Bernard Shaw himself. But they have no right to blame him for this, since it is, let me repeat, an inevitable necessity of the comic dramatist's art.

"The essential object of the comic dramatist's art," writes Bergson, "is the realistic representation of the seamy side of life, or the vices of men as individuals or as members of a social community." Criticism forgets this when it blames Shaw for an error of taste in his close intermingling of burlesque and tragedy, as in the death of Dubedat (*The Doctor's Dilemma*), or in the scene between Raina and Bluntschli in the first act of *Arms and the Man*. In real life burlesque follows hard upon the heels of tragedy. The necessities of his art compel the comic dramatist to imitate life in this juxtaposition. Nor must we forget that the sole aim of the comic dramatist is to educate by

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amusing. The laughter of farce gilds the moral pill ; it is the sauce which makes it easy to digest the meal. The English and the Americans, it appears, have seen nothing but the sauce, and overlook the solid part of the meal, for they do not take the plays seriously. On the Continent and on the other side of the Atlantic the public has been delighted with Shaw's wit, but has as a rule failed to understand the philosophical, moral, and social bearing of his plays. An American critic, for instance, one of Shaw's admirers, writes that the love of paradox is a fault in his plays.

We have seen that the comedy of ideas is essential to Shaw's dramas, and that he obtains it above all by the inversion and transposition of values. This compels him to make use of paradox. The comedy of ideas could hardly be produced in any other way, and Shaw must be praised, not censured, for the brilliant use he makes of this inevitable means. The irony which proceeds from the use of paradox is, of course, continually to be found in Shaw's dialogue. Numerous criticisms and notes made by German writers lead me to fear that the Shavian irony is quite uncomprehended by the German-speaking peoples. Either they miss it altogether or else they interpret it by contraries.

With good reason, some of the critics complain that the plays swarm with improbabilities. But

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let us make it quite clear what we are talking about. As regards improbabilities of plot and of incident, the accusation is just. But if we refer to the characters it is wrong to say that these exhibit improbabilities, for the characters are consistent, are logically designed. To Bernard Shaw, the plot of his plays, the incidents of the material action, seem matters of no importance, so that here it is quite true that we find improbabilities.

An influential and learned English critic, Mr. Walkley, who distributes praise and blame in the columns of the "Times," writes that Shaw's plays are altogether disorderly, that they reveal an utter contempt of form, and he tells us that this proves that Shaw is quite devoid of the French spirit, for the French have a marked sense of order and a strong appreciation of form. Mr. Walkley, however, is mistaken, for he forgets that the comic drama, inculcating general views, and having a moral aim, must subordinate the material action of the play to the intellectual action and to the characters.

The disorderliness he sees does in fact exist, but it exists only in respect of the material action, and Mr. Walkley has failed to recognize the severe and minute orderliness of the intellectual action. The intellectual action, we may remind the reader, is the development of the ideas which constitute

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the topic of the play, while the material action is the development of the events which constitute the topic of the play. In the Shavian drama, the material action cannot be precisely ordered, for it is necessarily subordinated to the intellectual action, to the characters. If the intellectual action is to be orderly and precise, the material action must inevitably be disorderly. This is what happens in Shaw's plays. Mr. Walkley has himself expounded, in a fine analysis, how it is that certain material incidents which seem episodic merely are in reality intimately associated with the intellectual action. When he writes that Shaw's plays exhibit a total contempt of form, he means form as it is exacted by the appearance of the play, dramatic form. But what we have just said about the perfect orderliness of Shaw's plays shows that, far from exhibiting a contempt of dramatic form, the plays manifest a great respect for this form, not, of course, in its aspect of tragedy, but in its aspect of comedy. It is because the plays are comedies that the material action is subordinated to the intellectual action, and that the material action is therefore disorderly. It is his very regard for the comic form which has led Shaw to make the material action of his plays disorderly. To me it seems that in his keen sense of order Bernard Shaw exhibits his strength, and exhibits a close



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approximation to the French spirit. Moreover, the plays manifest other qualities in which they show their kinship to the French spirit, such as their love of paradox and their keen and mordant criticism. This need not surprise us, for Shaw is of Irish extraction and passed his youth in Ireland. There is evidently much of the Celt in his composition, and this renders him far more closely akin to the French than to the English.

Augustin Filon was shocked to find that the audience leaving the theatre after the performance of one of Shaw's plays failed to carry away any definite conclusion, or at the very least some edifying phrase, some expression of sympathy for virtue. This is perfectly true, but are we to blame Shaw for it? Here, also, he is subject to the necessities of the comic dramatist's art, which is necessarily realist. In real life there are no definite conclusions, but always compromises. Since edifying incidents and expressions of sympathy for virtue exist only in the romantic imagination and are not found in real life, the comic dramatist cannot introduce them without playing false to his art.

It is, therefore, in accordance with the true principles of art that Bernard Shaw writes plays which lead up to nothing more than a vague compromise, or to the lamentable defeat of the ideal, and for this no one has any right to reproach him.

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An almost universal criticism runs as follows. "Everything is conversation, while there is no action. In these plays, all things are discussed and nothing happens. They are mere dissertation." Certainly, there is nothing but conversation, but we must not forget that conversation is a mode of action. In the plays, all things are discussed, it is true, but is it also true that nothing happens? By no means, for conversations take place, discussions happen. Something, therefore, happens. The mode of action differs from killing, embracing, walking, or running, but it is a mode of action still. If in Shaw's plays we do not see passion making persons commit crimes, if we do not see Mrs. Z. become the mistress of Mr. X., or anything of that sort, we do see, on the other hand, persons who think out loud, and who unclothe themselves morally before the audience. This is a different kind of action from the physical unclothing which is displayed to us in the works of other writers, but it also is none the less an action.

"Shaw's plays are almost entirely wanting in strong emotional interactions, in those profound spiritual crises which are the essence of dramatic art." I cannot understand what the critic was thinking about when he wrote this extraordinarily wrong-headed passage. The plays are full of profound spiritual crises, and we have noted some in

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this book. The same is true of the plays we have not analysed, but it is unnecessary to give details. There is passion in Shaw's plays ; and in some of them, such as *The Philanderer*, *Candida*, *You Never Can Tell*, and *The Doctor's Dilemma*, there is intense passion ; but its manifestations are always curbed and restrained by burlesque and by farce. So marked, indeed, is this tragedy of passion and of spiritual crises, that a trifling error of interpretation on the part of the actors suffices to make the play take the form of tragedy instead of comedy. This is what happened in the case of *Candida*.

"These are not plays, this is not drama," exclaim most of the critics. "The author is an ideamonger endeavouring to force his ideas into the dramatic mould, and failing in the attempt," writes Walkley. These are assertions easily made but difficult to prove. How can it be said that Shaw's works are not plays, when they have been staged hundreds and thousands of times, and have drawn laughter and applause from a numerous public in Germany, Great Britain, the United States, Scandinavia, Poland, Hungary, Russia, Belgium, Holland, Italy, Argentina, and France? How can it be said that they are not acting plays when we find that such distinguished artists, such admirable comedians, as Ellen Terry, Granville Barker, Sorma, Arnold Daly, Richard Mansfield, Forbes-Robert-

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son, Robert Loraine, Jarno, Steinruck, and many others, are never more forcible or more spirited than when impersonating Shaw's characters. The assertions quoted above are so flatly contradicted by the facts that it would be needless to discuss them further were it not that they sum up the opinion of those critics who have failed to understand Bernard Shaw's dramatic method, novel to them though really old, because their judgments are founded upon the conceptions of dramatic art that have been imposed by the authority of Scribe. This is the mainspring of the general antagonism (general, but not universal) of the critics wherever Bernard Shaw's works have been staged, and it is for this reason that we must study the matter with the attention that its importance demands.

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### II. TECHNIQUE OF THE CONTEMPORARY DRAMA.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the dramas of Scribe had an enormous vogue. They are cleverly constructed, exhibiting a combination of means and of effects which gives their dramatic action a very brisk movement and a vigorous unexpectedness unknown to the earlier drama, that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A suspense of interest, which makes the audience always hold its breath, awaiting the solution of the mystery

which is not solved until the *dénouement*—such was the dramatic method introduced by Scribe. Succeeding playwrights, faithful disciples, followed the technique of the master. They studied Scribe's methods, and brought them to perfection; and in their case, as in Scribe's own, the use of these methods hindered the observation and the expression of characters, ideas, and morality.

Consequently the entire nineteenth-century drama was based upon Scribe's methods. In the vast number of plays written during this period there are naturally to be found numerous differences of technique and of matter. The eternal duel of the sexes, commonly in the form of adultery, remains the corner-stone; but upon this apparently inevitable base the various playwrights have erected numerous superstructures, some heavy and some light, and variously ornamented. Certain writers prefer the tragic and others the comic vein; some intermingle tragedy and comedy in varying proportions. As a result of such intermingling we have, on the one hand, the problem-plays, serious comedies, with an intellectual and moral bearing; and, on the other hand, those dramatic comedies whose sole appeal is to the sentimentality of the audience. Sardou, a greater Scribe, is the master-writer of plays of this latter kind, with his inexhaustible fertility, his cleverness in weaving a plot and pro-

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viding for its *dénouement*, in his management of situations. Light comedy has no tragic element, remaining purely in the comic vein ; but even when written by Labiche such comedies remain trivial and superficial, producing a merely mechanical laughter.

The problem play, in whose production Emil Augier and Alexandre Dumas fils excelled, is the logical demonstration of a principle. It is the staging of a debate, of the pros and cons concerning a phenomenon of social rather than of individual interest. The dramatist takes a problem, and makes it the setting for characters who argue on its aspects. In many cases all, or nearly all, an author's plays deal with the same problem. Every one knows that the work of Dumas fils is concerned only with the question of adultery, dealing with the sexual duel between man and woman as seen from one single point of view. Lest the audience should fail to recognize the problem of the play, Dumas always introduces a character whose only purpose is to draw the morals of the various scenes. In Augier's case and still more in that of Dumas fils the problem play tended to take the form of melodrama, very different from the profound and amusing comedy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These writers' plays are not comedies of character, although Emil Augier made some

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essays in this line. They can hardly be called comedies of manners, for their realism is distorted, on the one hand by the problem, and on the other by concern for a *dénouement* in which virtue is rewarded and vice punished, or at least one in which vice is censured and virtue extolled.

Adultery was the mainspring of all these plays, and to such an extent that they exhibited themselves for the most part as dramatic special pleadings to display the iniquity of the current codes. Other dramatic authors, inspired by the success of Augier and Dumas fils, followed a similar technique and defended similar theses. With trifling differences the same thing happened in every country. Sometimes, indeed, the variations in the environment of the action produced special shades of characterization, so that when the play was transported to another country it exhibited a certain freshness of conception and could be taken for a novelty.

It may be admitted that these problem plays sometimes had a practical moral bearing, since it was possible that in one country or another they might contribute to the reform of legalized sexual relationships. On the whole, however, their effect was trifling, because they dealt always with the particular, and never attained to broad general conceptions. None of them are permeated with a real philosophy of life.

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Whilst all over the world the playwrights were thus engaged in copying, almost unchanged, the dramatic methods of Augier and of Dumas fils, in Norway two writers of genius, Ibsen and Björnson, were endeavouring to effect a renaissance of comedy. From the technical point of view they followed unhesitatingly the practice of introducing a strong framework of incident to constitute the material action. The plays produced by these writers during the closing decades of the nineteenth century are for the most part exceedingly well constructed, in accordance with the formulas of the school of Scribe. Some of them may even be regarded as models of this type of construction, as, for example, Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*, in which the technique is identical with that employed by Augier and Dumas. The dramatic revival at which Ibsen aimed was a revival, not of form but of content. It was not that he abandoned the problem play dear to Augier and to Dumas, but that he lifted it to an elevation which neither of these authors had attained. He passed from the particular to the general. The majority of the plays written by Ibsen in his maturer years, between 1868 and 1888, deal with legal marriage and the family. But where Dumas saw particulars merely, such as the effects of the French marriage laws, Ibsen, a man of genius, saw general considerations. He



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saw that the intestine struggles of families are the expression of an antagonism between our ideals and our actions ; between our ideals and our customs ; between our social institutions and our individual development. Ibsen is obsessed by the problem of the will. He delves deeper than the earlier writers of problem plays, and the very essence of things seems to him bad. He regards the principle of authority as criminal. He considers that society imposes restrictions upon the individual, that the State is the curse of the individual, conflicting with the individual tendency to unceasing development. Such is the essential theme of all Ibsen's plays, which are special pleadings on behalf of this cause.

With Ibsen the problem play was no longer national, aiming merely at the reform of some particular legal code ; it became international, general, human, aiming at the reform of customs, the diminution of authority in all its forms, the increase of social liberty. Thus the problem play attained a new social amplitude. As long as Ibsen's work was unknown outside Scandinavia, it could not influence the dramatists of the future. But as soon as his plays had been translated, at first into German, and then into French and English, they ought to have exercised a powerful action for good upon the younger generation of playwrights. They

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ought to have exercised this action, and yet they failed to do so, at least to any considerable extent.

It was in 1889 that Ibsen's plays first appeared in France, coming from Germany, where they had already been known for a number of years. At this date there were signs of a dawning theatrical revival, alike in Berlin and in Paris, in Munich, in London, and in Brussels. The younger playwrights were trying to provide theatre-goers with food more substantial than that furnished by the everlasting theme of adultery, with its everlasting plot, comic or tragic according to the nature of the stage setting. Under the influence of the naturalistic movement and of its chief, Emile Zola, they endeavoured "to replace man in nature, in his proper environment, and to analyse all the causes, physical as well as social, which determine human action." They attempted social plays whose themes were less special, more general, than the themes dear to Augier and to Dumas. Since for these attempts at a theatrical revival a new theatre was requisite, the Théâtre Libre was opened by André Antoine in Paris in 1887, and a similar new theatre, Die Freie Bühne, was founded in Berlin. In London, in 1889, Grein started the Independent Theatre. But although the plays produced in these theatres dealt with social problems, they were still on the same lines as those of previous playwrights, though

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a trifle more profound. No new voice was manifest to proclaim a new evangel.

This new voice would have been found in the dramatic work of Ibsen, had it not unfortunately happened that an error of interpretation prevented the complete understanding of the excessively realist plays of the Norwegian master. Instead of presenting him in his fine simplicity, instead of exposing his clear philosophy of the individual in conflict with the authority of the State, his plays were everywhere staged with certain peculiarities of gesture, mental interpretation, and intonation which suggested the existence of vast and impenetrable depths. This impression switched off the playwrights towards an obscure symbolism. Even men of great talent were misled—even Hauptmann, who now abandoned the naturalistic vein of his masterwork, *The Weavers*. But among these younger playwrights there was at least one exception, Bernard Shaw. He understood the intensely realist writings of Ibsen, and saw that if the work of this man of genius opened a new path to the drama it was because of its display, not of the superficial and secondary causes of the events that occurred upon the stage, but of the profound and primary causes of these, the causes which really determine human action, causes general to humanity, independent of codes, of the laws peculiar to any

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one nation, however great this nation may be (for all nations are small when compared with humanity). Such was Ibsen's influence upon Bernard Shaw.

The other innovating playwrights failed to see the path opened to them by Ibsen, the man of genius, and they adopted a method of obscure symbolism which alarmed the critics. Naturally these revolted, and were followed in their revolt by the general public, upon whom the monetary success of a play depends. The result was that the attempts at innovation gradually became rarer, and were finally discontinued. Authors of talent, sometimes of exceptional talent, returned to the manner of Dumas and of Augier, to the problem play. Since there was no longer any need of a special theatre in which to present the works of the young authors, the free theatres everywhere disappeared. But if all these playwrights, French, German, Russian, and Italian, returned (with the exception of a very small number, who remained faithful to symbolism) to the problem play constructed after the manner of Scribe and Dumas, they had none the less improved somewhat upon their model. As a rule their plays contain more individual psychology; the theme is less restricted; some of the principles upon which the existing capitalist order is founded are analysed and illustrated. Sexual relationships are no longer

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the exclusive topics of discussion. There appear upon the stage other questions that trouble men's minds to-day: the army, but not militarism; the clergy, but not religion; the magistracy, but not justice; wealth, but not capitalism. Moreover, all these questions are considered in a fragmentary manner; they are isolated; there seems to be no connexion between them. We have no more than anecdotes; and these are always, as far as the technique is concerned, after the manner of Scribe, and as far as the morality is concerned, after the manner of Dumas fils.

To sum up, in the work even of the boldest of these writers we find no suggestion of anything more than partial reforms, to be effected by legal methods, by a reform of the laws, that is to say, and not by a reform of the customs which really make the laws. They are special pleadings, wherein vaguely and at intervals there occurs some recognition of the bonds by which these questions are interconnected; but the writers immediately relapse to the level of particular considerations. They are special pleadings, and for this reason there is no objective exposition of all the different points of view, but those only are illustrated which favour the demonstration of the thesis dear to the author. How often, too, does the conclusion take the form of an anodyne administered in despair, and for fear

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of alarming the sensibilities of the audience. This is a fear we trace again and again in the work of all the successful playwrights. They write their plays as a tailor makes a coat, to order.

The natural result of such a system, which is general if not universal throughout the Western civilized world, is that all the plays are very much like one another, whoever may be the author. Whoever has seen one of them has really seen all the rest. As Georges Polti so aptly expresses it, adultery-in-dissoluble-marriage has succeeded to the adultery-in-indissoluble-marriage dear to Dumas. But essentially we still have the same thing: a few witty sayings; more or less emotion and sentiment; a few trifling variations in the plot, the incident, and the psychology—that is all. It is only the sauce which is different: sometimes peppery; sometimes salt; sometimes sugared. We have the French sauce, often highly spiced; the English sauce, which is extremely insipid; the Russian sauce, with a very special flavour; the Scandinavian sauce, used always to season a somewhat more substantial dish; the German sauce, which is apt to be rather thick; the Spanish or Italian sauce, differing but little from that of France, which is really the one in most general use. The sauce, then, varies, but the dish is always the same. Moreover, the dramatists who serve it up, being adepts in the culinary

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art, flavour the dish so cleverly, that it is only when digestion is well advanced that we perceive that after all we have had exactly the same to eat as at the dinner of the day before. And since the dish is always the same and nothing but the sauce has to be changed, the meal is prepared with a celerity which can astonish those only who do not know the recipe.

It need hardly be said that the aftertaste of all these dishes is practically the same. Hence the gustatory faculties of the critic undergo a more or less complete atrophy. Having lost the habit of tasting the dish, he perceives nothing but the sauce. When, therefore, Bernard Shaw offers him a new dish, really new, and with a new sauce, he refuses it disdainfully, and even with anger. It is painful to his gustatory nerves. In revolt he exclaims: "These are not plays, this is not dramatic art!"

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### III. THE NATURE OF DRAMATIC ART.

Before we can know what dramatic art is we must know what we mean by art, of which dramatic art is no more than a part. Numerous are the philosophers who have sought to tell us what we mean by Art, and by the Beautiful. Almost all of them have defined it in teleological terms, saying:

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“ There is not and cannot be a self-existent beauty. Beauty can be perceived subjectively only. There are certain relationships which we call beautiful, and art consists in discovering these, in throwing light on them—in a word, in pleasing.” This is not the place for a critical study of the meaning of the terms “beauty” and “art.” It is enough for our purpose to know that the definitions of Art and of Beauty are almost always purely teleological, and that, to sum up, as Tolstoi writes, “every notion of beauty reduces itself for us to the experience of a certain kind of pleasure.”

Art, a means of communication, a means of union between human beings, is the method of expression of certain sensations which we term beautiful because these sensations are agreeable to us, because they please. The aim of art, therefore, as Mario Pilo and Batteux have written, is to furnish pleasure—that is to say, to give rise in onlookers, audience, or readers to an agreeable impression, and also to induce in the creator, in the artist himself, a sensation of active joy (Sully). In a word, the artist is a merchant of pleasure. To distribute pleasure, to give pleasure, is his primary and essential function.

In conformity with this definition of Art, Shaw's work is perfectly artistic. It furnishes very great pleasure to the onlooker, to the reader, to the



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audience. No one can doubt this, not even those who, like Mr. Walkley, refuse to admit that Bernard Shaw is a dramatist. Shaw dispenses pleasure on a magnificent scale, and for this very reason his work is eminently artistic. We may even say that his works of art are of an extremely lofty rank. As we have seen, they address themselves simultaneously to the feelings, to the character, and to the intelligence. They bring into action all the mental faculties of the reader or of the audience. The pleasure these experience is at once intellectual, emotional, and moral, and is therefore lofty and refined. Bernard Shaw's work is good—if, at least, Voltaire was right when he said, "All methods are good, except one which bores us."

It follows that Bernard Shaw's work is beautiful and artistic in accordance with the accepted definitions of Beauty and of Art. If some exceptional persons are unable to admit this, it is because the work in question is new alike in manner and in matter, and because the natural misoneism of the objectors is shocked by the novelty to an extent which renders them unable to recognize the beauty.

It is, then, impossible to deny that Shaw's plays are works of art. But are they works of dramatic art? May it not be said that they are merely works of literary art?

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Drama is the staged representation of manifestations of vital activity, perceived by the senses and by the intelligence of the audience. These manifestations occur in the form of conflicts between the instinctive needs, sentiments, passions, and conceptions of the various characters ; and, in each individual character, between the instinctive needs, the acquired sentiments, and the reason. The development of the voluntary activities employed in the service of the sentiments, the passions, and the concepts is displayed to the audience. These voluntary activities, in the course of their development, act and react, within the limits of each character, and mutually among the characters, determining and being determined by one another. We are shown a medley of conflicting wills, the object of the display being to produce a pleasurable emotion.

Thus dramatic art is the art of inducing pleasure in the onlooker and in the audience through the instrumentality of various characters whose sayings, doings, and general behaviour reveal their internal struggles and their conflicts one with another. In the onlooker this produces an emotion, which may remain on the purely emotional plane, without any intervention on the part of the intelligence or of the reflective powers. The emotion may, on the other hand, be intellectual, in so far as it is pro-

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duced by the activity of the faculties of reflection, comparison, and deduction. In most cases, of course, this intervention of the intellectual faculties is instantaneous and unconscious. If it is conscious, it is because there is a defect either in the work itself or in the observer.

Such is the nature of dramatic art. Such must be the essential characteristics of every drama. But we must distinguish between the different kinds of drama, for the essential characters of tragedy and of comedy are necessarily different. We need concern ourselves here with comedy alone, since the dramas of Bernard Shaw are pure comedies.

The aim of the comic drama is to display types and not individuals, typical characters, beings perfectly real, stripping them of all worldly and social conventions, all that masks reality. Comedy aims at generalization, at philosophy, at moralizing, and tends to fuse with life, of which it has to give a realistic picture. From the point of view of the moralist or of the philosopher, it is not the action itself which matters, but the gesture, the setting, the accompanying words, which reveal and explain the motives of the action. Hence, in comedy, the onlooker's interest must be directed above all towards the words, thoughts, and gestures of the setting, and not towards the actions themselves.

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A comedy, like every drama, produces pleasure by the staging of various characters whose sayings and doings manifest the mutual conflicts among the characters and their internal struggles. Like every other drama, a comedy displays different wills engaged in mutual struggles. Thus, like all other dramas, a comedy produces emotions, whether on the emotional or on the intellectual plane. But, in contradistinction with other kinds of drama, a comic drama must represent typical and absolutely realist characters; it must moralize, and therefore it must make the audience think, setting in motion in the onlooker's mind the faculties of reflection, comparison, and deduction. For this reason a comedy must give a preponderant place to the sayings, the thoughts, and the gestures, to the setting which reveals the mental states of the characters and the motives of their actions, so as to establish types of character; upon these things the attention of the audience must be concentrated, instead of being directed to the actions themselves. Action, plot, and incident are accessory; they are of value only through the gestures, the states of mind, and the sayings which they engender. The essential things are the gestures, the states of mind, the motives, and the concepts, which serve to display types of character, and which induce an intellectually tinged emotion. Conse-

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quently in the comedy the essence is rather in the *word* than in the *action*. In the case of tragedy the reverse of this is true.

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To write plays it is essential, first of all, to submit to the necessities imposed by the materials available for the playwright, and subsequently to those imposed by the aim he has in view. The materials of the drama are for the most part human beings, living and moving on the stage, and before an audience. The other materials, representing the environment in which the human beings live, are always accessory, and do not need to be considered. The dramatist has to make use of his materials by the display of actions, gestures, and states of mind, and by the use of words by the characters. It is a necessary condition of every play that the characters should act, gesticulate, exhibit states of mind, and speak. In addition to these conditions, imposed by the nature of the materials, there is another condition, and one only, imposed by the end in view—to please the audience. (We exclude from consideration the pantomime, a play in dumb show; and the *tableau vivant*, which displays without either gesture or word a spectacle in which action is completely arrested.) Such are the *real* determining conditions of the drama which fix the limits within which it can come into exist-

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ence. Any other rules that have been laid down are the outcome simply of conventions, whose value is based upon the acceptance of what is known as the argument from authority: *magister dixit*.

The law known as the *law of the three unities* in dramatic art—that is to say, unity of place, time, and action—is an Aristotelian convention and a valueless one, having been unceasingly violated in the past and being still violated every day. The general opinion of the critics and of the playwrights is that unity of action cannot be too rigorously observed. As Töpffer puts it, we must never allow two or more different strains of action to rub elbows in a single play. The expression of opinion is based upon the words of Aristotle, the Master, who insisted that in the case of every drama there should be a single strain of action, reasonably comprehensive, having a beginning, a middle, and an end—having, that is to say, an exposition, complications and situations, and a *dénouement*.

This dictum of the Master has by many been accepted as an inalterable law. The critics considered it as a law because it set the stroke for the material action, for the plot, the incident, the characters, and the ideas, and this simplified the task of criticism. In passing judgment on plays it gave them an exceedingly simple rule, one of facile application. It was much easier to apply

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this rule than to form a precise and independent judgment of the characters and of the ideas. The critic, therefore, obeying the natural instinct to exert himself as little as possible, joyfully adopted the convention of unity of action. The dramatist, for his part, regarded the convention as a law never to be broken because he found it easier to imagine plot, incidents, material action than to depict characters and to furnish ideas. Not so much work was required, and in giving supremacy to the material action of the play the dramatists were delighted to regard as a vital necessity what was nothing but a convention which all are at liberty to accept or reject as they please. This convention, once adopted, quickly became transformed in men's minds into a law which could not be broken except under pain of no longer writing plays. Applying this alleged law, dramatic criticism assures us: "A play can exist without characters, but not without a *plot*; a drama is not a portrait gallery. In addition to characters there must be incidents"—and so on. But all this is convention, not necessity.

Nothing in the nature of the drama—nothing, that is to say, in the materials employed or in the aim pursued—necessitates this convention of unity of action. So true is this that such light comedies as those of Labiche comprise a succes-

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sion of scenes quite devoid of unity of action ; there is no exposition, no complication, no *dénouement*—but they are plays none the less. If the objection be made that these are not an elevated form of drama, but that in lofty drama unity of action is essential, I must answer that this is a sophism, for the objector is assuming the very proposition which he needs to prove. He must demonstrate that without unity of action it is impossible to construct a play of a lofty type, impossible to stage characters mutually struggling, acting, gesticulating, and speaking, and thus exercising an emotional influence on the audience. To accept this as a fact without proving it merely shows how ready are unreflective persons to accept the dictum of the Master.

Rules which are not necessary conditions, imposed by the things themselves, by their very nature, rules or laws established by men, are valid for those only who choose to obey them. All progress is the work of persons who disregard such rules or laws. And they cease to be rules or laws when the infractions have shown them to be wrong. We may recall the words of Lysidas, in *La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes* : “ Those who have read Aristotle and Horace see at a glance, Madame, that this comedy sins against all the rules of art.” To which Dante makes the following answer : “ You



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are ridiculous with these rules of yours with which you impress the ignorant, and weary us every day. I should like to know whether it is not the rule of all rules to please, and whether a play which has attained this end can fail to be a good one." *This is the rule of rules, to please.* All roads are good which lead to this end.

The aim of the writer of comedies is to amuse the audience and to make the audience think. If he succeeds in doing these things, his play will be a play and a good one, whether it violates or does not violate the conventional rules laid down by the Lysidas of every age. It is enough that a comedy should satisfy the conditions imposed by its materials and by its aim. It is enough that the characters should act, gesticulate, exhibit states of mind, and speak, in such a way that from these actions, gestures, states of mind, and utterances the audience may derive pleasure and may draw a moral or deduce a philosophy of life.

Our analysis of Bernard Shaw's plays has shown that the characters act, gesticulate, exhibit states of mind, and talk—talk a great deal. These actions, gestures, states of mind, and utterances, the manifestations of the internal conflicts of the characters or of their mutual struggles, are the expression of conflicting wills. From these conflicts and these struggles, thus manifested and thus ex-

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pressed, there results for the audience a sensation of pleasure—it is proved by laughter, by applause, by the success of these plays. The audience also draws a moral, deduces a philosophy of life. These facts cannot be disputed, not even by those who decry Shaw's dramatic work. His plays, then, conforming to the only necessary conditions of dramatic art, truly belong to the sphere of that art, for the writer employs the materials proper to his art and satisfies the conditions imposed by these materials. For those who regard the argument from authority as more valid than any demonstration (because the argument from authority saves the trouble of analysis, reflection, and synthesis, I may repeat that the dramatic art of Bernard Shaw satisfies the rule of all rules, to please ; and I may point out that the writer who has established this rule of all rules is Molière, an undisputed master of dramatic art.

## CHAPTER VI

### PARALLELISM BETWEEN THE DRAMA OF SHAW, THE GRÆCO-ROMAN DRAMA, THE MEDIEVAL DRAMA, THE DRAMA OF MOLIÈRE, AND THE DRAMA OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

THE study we have just made of Bernard Shaw's dramatic method, analysing it, examining what has been said of it by the critics, and taking a summary view of the contemporary drama, enables us to effect a precise characterization of our author's work.

Bernard Shaw's comedy is a drama of ideas and not a drama of incident. Among the happenings of life it looks for what they reveal that is general, and it displays the mutual interconnections among the various events. The aim of his plays is, while inducing pleasure, to display to the audience that connection existing between things which in real life the fortuitous succession of events exhibits always as separate and apparently unrelated

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(Bernard Shaw). Hence the Shavian drama is philosophic, and the material action is subordinated to the intellectual action. The latter, being the essence of comic drama, is of necessity plainly displayed, especially by the dialogue, which sometimes becomes a dissertation, a conversation, a debate ; and this is all drama, excellent drama if the audience is pleased by it.

Shaw's comedies display to the audience a conflict of wills, concentered in individuals. These individuals are set in motion by ideas rather than by feelings ; or, to express the matter more accurately, the characters, consciously or unconsciously, expose the feelings which actuate them in such a manner that apparently ideas seem to replace feelings. These comedies induce emotion in the audience ; but this emotion, often very considerable, is in most cases commonly on the intellectual rather than on the emotional plane, for the conflicts are between wills, one at least of which is always a reasoning will. Shaw's comedies are a mingling of the comedy of incident, words, phraseology, and character, with the comedy of ideas. In his use of the comedy of incident and of character he sometimes lapses into farce, and writes almost always in the vein of light comedy. In his use of the comedy of ideas he attains to the loftiest range.

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Shaw's plays exercise a moralizing influence, for in them we have "an indirect discourse by a number of characters who converse with one another in order to convey a meaning to the public," as Emil Deschanel has said of Aristophanes. His comedies deal neither with adultery nor with romantic love; but sexual attraction, stripped of all romantic conventions, often plays an important part. Sex, however, never monopolizes the stage. Political, social, philosophical, and literary questions are also continually discussed. The author displays a mastery of dramatic technique, and this is why the audience is delighted with his plays. The technique being apparently new in form, the Shavian comedy seems to represent a new dramatic system, one in which the development of the play of feeling and of the material action are subordinated to the presentation of character, to the discussion of ideas, in a word, to the intellectual action.

This technique seems new, and for this reason it shocks, for the majority of human beings suffer from misoneism. But the novelty is no more than apparent, and the impression results from a comparison of Shaw's plays with those that are written in accordance with the technique of Scribe. Shaw's technique is that of an earlier date. When we examine the work of dramatic authors of a time

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anterior to Scribe, when we study the drama of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, we are astonished by the resemblances we find to the work of Shaw, notwithstanding the differences that inevitably exist, dependent upon the differing environment in which the earlier playwrights lived.

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I have said that Bernard Shaw's plays are not divided into scenes. Some of his later works, *Getting Married* and *Misalliance*, for instance, are not even divided into acts. There is nothing new about this, for it is a reproduction of the technique of the Greek dramatists, whose plays were divided neither into scenes nor into acts. The Latin and the medieval drama, too, knew nothing of division into scenes. Certain of Shaw's plays, such as *Candida* and *Getting Married*, pursue their action throughout in the same locality, without change of stage-setting, this proceeding being also a renewal of that of the Greek drama, and one employed in the classical tragedies of such writers as Racine and Voltaire.

The lengthy and minutely detailed stage-directions found in Shaw's plays have attracted general attention, and almost all the critics have regarded them as a novelty. But in the liturgical dramas of the Middle Ages, from the tenth to the fourteenth century, the stage directions are excessively de-

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tailed. The gestures and the expression are minutely detailed. As M. Lintilhac writes in his book *Le Théâtre Sérieux au Moyen Age*, a mass of most precise instruction is given. Sometimes these stage directions almost seem to constitute part of the dialogue, as in a fourteenth-century *Resurrection* play—and as in Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* and *The Devil's Disciple*. The long descriptions detail, not only the costume, but also the physical aspect determined by the professional, social, and climatic environments, the physical aspect, which, in accordance with the technique of Balzac, mirrors the mental aspect of the character.

These precise indications of the expression and of the gestures—that is to say, of the emotional states of the characters—are not found in Ibsen's plays, and this is perhaps one reason for the obscurity of many of the works of the Norwegian master. In the absence of such precise indications, the actor is unable to effect the proper correspondence between his emotional and his intellectual state. To the absence, too, of precise details, indicating the successive mental states of the characters, we must perhaps attribute the fact that in the plays of Augier and of Dumas fils (and especially in those of the latter) the figures have to some extent the aspect of marionettes. Hence Zola criticized the plays of these authors as purely conventional. It was Zola's

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desire that "man should be put back into nature, into his proper environment, through an analysis of all the physical and social causes which determine human action." In a word, Zola wished that the drama, as far as its technique is concerned, should follow the inspiration of those novels in which men are shown moving in a social, regional, climatic, ancestral, and mental environment which is described at considerable length.

The lengthy stage-directions of Shaw's plays conform to Zola's wishes, and they do so under a dramatic form, without interfering with the action of the comedy. The necessary movement of the play would be considerably weakened, and even entirely arrested, if the requisite descriptions of the environment in which the characters move were to be inserted in the dialogue. Occasionally a part of these descriptions may be thus introduced, but if this be done care must be taken not to weaken the vivacity of the dialogue, the subtlety of the reasoning, the naturalness of the conversation, its conciseness, and its clearness. When Shaw chooses to adopt this method he is almost always brilliantly successful; but the descriptive matter thus introduced into the dialogue is far from ranking in importance with the descriptions of environment found in Balzac's and in Zola's novels. Yet descriptions are needed to display the characters of the persons



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of the drama, and to explain their origin and the causes of their actions. To this end, Shaw has recourse to a method employed in the realist drama of the Middle Ages. He provides precise, detailed, and minute stage-directions, so that for the reader every play becomes a real romance in dialogue, as interesting and engrossing as the novel, and perhaps more lively, owing to the use of the conversational form.

There must be a real need for this combination of the novel with the drama, for the idea of such a union was in the air in 1892, when Shaw began to use the method in England. At this very time in France Marcel Luguet introduced the same method in a play which in other respects was commonplace, *Le Missionnaire*. "An alliance between the novel and the stage," he wrote, "enables us to describe the characters in positive terms, instead of leaving it open to every one to represent them as he pleases, more or less in conformity with the author's views." Marcel Luguet, however, effected this alliance in an extremely heavy manner, one which was really destructive to the play, for he made a special actor read his descriptions, interrupting the dialogue from time to time for this purpose. It was thus that *Le Missionnaire* was staged in Antoine's Théâtre Libre. Shaw, however, understood that as far as the audience is con-

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cerned the staging of the play, the gestures, the expression, and the movements of the characters should replace the descriptions. In the printed plays these were introduced for the reader, and for the actors, whose minds must be impregnated with the author's views.

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We have previously noted that in the first act of Shaw's comedies there is no exposition such as characterizes plays written in accordance with the technique of Scribe. Their construction is, indeed, that of the comedies of Molière. In *Tartuffe*, in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, just as in Shaw's plays, each person of the drama characterizes himself and comes to life directly he begins to speak. It is in the action itself that the play finds its exposition, for we have to do with characters and not with incidents. As the play proceeds, the exposition develops logically and progressively in harmony with the nature of the characters. The same method is employed by Ibsen and by Strindberg. Sometimes the construction of Shaw's plays seems to exhibit a mere succession of scenes, without apparent interconnexion. Similar is the construction of the comedies of Aristophanes, who employed what Emile Deschanel, in his *Etudes sur Aristophane*, has termed the "episodic method."

The critics, all thoroughly imbued with Scribe's

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technique, were almost unanimous in finding fault with Shaw's plays for their want of action, their lack of incident and situation, or at least for their improbability. It is certainly easy to describe the plot of a play by Scribe, Augier, Dumas fils, or Ibsen, but it is usually impossible to describe the plot of a play by Bernard Shaw. This is a characteristic which Shaw's work shares with that of Aristophanes, where there is no incident to speak of, no complication and no *dénouement*, while we have a whole gallery of living figures of comedy. In Aristophanes' work the action is fantastic, unreal, complex ; it takes place in an imaginary world, no one knows where, at the same time everywhere and nowhere. What he really gives us is a political, philosophical, or literary demonstration. It is the same with Shaw's comedies ; but while Shaw is criticized for this, no one finds fault with Aristophanes, nor with all the farces and *soties* of the Middle Ages, which were mere frameworks for satire, usually social satire, and had no action at all.

Such absence or insufficiency of action was usual, and was indeed almost universal, down to the time of Beaumarchais. Molière, for example, has no plot at all in *Les Précieuses Ridicules* or in *Les Fâcheux*. Everything is anecdotal in *L'Ecole des Femmes*, a play which, according to Voltaire, is

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constructed with such perfect art that everything seems to be moving and acting at once. There is no plot in *La Critique de l'Ecole des Femmes*, none in *Le Misanthrope*, none in *L'Impromptu de Versailles*; but we have animated scenes, lively characters, pleasant conversation, sometimes a trifle heated, and a movement sustained to the very end. Schlegel finds fault with Molière on the ground that *Le Misanthrope* is merely a dissertation in dialogue and has no action. The statement is true; but the activity of this prolonged conversation replaces action, furnishing the audience with just as much interest and just as much pleasure. Similarly, Shaw's plays are often prolonged conversations whose activity is so great that the audience finds them no less interesting and amusing than the action brought into such strong relief in the plays of a Scribe or a Sardou.

In Molière's plays there is so little action and so little plot that M. Lintilhac writes: "*Le Misanthrope* is the triumph of that kind of comedy of character which makes something out of nothing. Exactly the same may be said of some of Shaw's plays, of *The Man of Destiny*, for example, for they contain nothing but a delightful conversation, illustrating characters and criticizing society. When there is any dramatic action in Molière's work it is often as improbable, incoherent, and fan-

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tastic as that for which Bernard Shaw has been so freely criticized.

All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, playwrights concerned themselves very little about plot and material action. Jules Lemaître, in *La Comédie après Molière et le Théâtre de Dancourt*, tells us that most of Dancourt's comedies are lacking in dramatic action. "But this does not prevent the characters from displaying a remarkably effective action. I do not know any other plays which are so extraordinarily amusing." Is not this the same opinion as that expressed by some of Shaw's critics who, while they refuse to dignify his work by the name of drama, yet admit that it is delightful? To sum up, an ingenious complication of plot, replacing observation, character, and criticism, did not make its appearance until after the time of Beaumarchais. It was introduced, above all, by Scribe, whose method was followed by all the playwrights of the nineteenth century.

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We have pointed out that in Bernard Shaw's plays there is an extremely coherent and vigorous intellectual action, and that to this the material action is subordinated. In Molière's work we find the same thing, with this difference, however, that here the action is usually psychological in place of being intellectual, by which I mean that it is the develop-

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ment of a character or of a series of characters constituting the subject of the play. Let me remind the reader that the intellectual action of a play is the development of an idea or of a series of ideas constituting its subject, while the material action is the development of an event constituting its subject. The introduction of a powerful and orderly psychological action leads Molière to place at the centre of his material action a figure whose character dictates all the happenings of the play as these react upon the various persons of the drama. Everything starts from this central figure, to it everything returns. *Don Juan*, *Tartuffe*, and *L'Avare* are typical examples. The reader will remember that a number of Bernard Shaw's plays, *Man and Superman* and *The Philanderer*, for example, are constructed in the same manner. From the ideas of this central figure the intellectual action derives all its movement and all its interest, just as it is from the character of *L'Avare*, *Don Juan*, *Tartuffe*, or *Alceste* that the psychological action of these plays derives all its movement and all its interest.

Accustomed to plays having a complication, an entanglement to disentangle, the critics have risen in revolt against the methods of Bernard Shaw, whose plays have no *dénouement* because there is no complication. But they forget that Molière also

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had no real *dénouement* in his plays. This fact has been very clearly pointed out by Brunetière, who added, "In this respect Molière's plays resemble real life, where nothing begins and nothing comes to an end"—precisely what the present writer has said about Shaw's plays.

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Shaw's realism is manifested, on the one hand, by minute and infinitesimally detailed accounts of manners and customs, and, on the other hand, by the representation of characters which are not homogeneous but of heterogeneous composition, never wholly pleasing nor wholly displeasing. These two kinds of realism are not found in association in the work of other contemporary playwrights. Ibsen displays his realism rather in the minuteness of his description of manners and customs than in his analysis of character. Dumas and Augier, in so far as they are realists, are so only in the nature of their plots, their *dramatis personæ*, and their style ; they are not realists in the detailed pictures they give us of manners and customs or in their analysis of character. Our contemporary playwrights follow in the footsteps of these masters, and their realism never extends into the minute details of domestic life, and never goes so far as to lead them to present us with characters which are not entirely homogeneous.

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They leave this to Molière. Molière found nothing inconsistent in the idea "that a person might be ludicrous in certain respects and a sensible man in others." He wished to be true to life, and he made his characters, as Shaw makes them to-day, persons who exhibit an admixture of bad qualities and of good, just as we find them in real life. Thus alike in the plays of Molière and in those of Shaw we sometimes find that there is not a single character who is wholly agreeable (cf. Lintilhac, *La Comédie, XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, p. 274). We see the same thing in the comedies of Aristophanes, but we never see it in the work of ordinary modern playwrights, for these make their characters perfectly homogeneous, wholly pleasing or wholly displeasing. As regards the realist depiction of manners and customs, we find this as well marked in Shaw as in Molière, who took for his model the precise realism of the medieval mystery plays, farces, and *soties*, and that of the comedies of Plautus and Aristophanes. His realism recalls that of Teniers, that of Rubens in his *Kermesse*. In the nineteenth century novel we find this same realism once more in the works of Balzac and of Zola, but we do not find it in the dramas of Augier, of Dumas, or of the playwrights of our own day.

Shaw's plays, like those of Molière, are at the same time comedies of manners and comedies of



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character. In Shaw, as in Molière, the realism of the writer leads to a reiteration of ideas. In the long speeches of some of the characters, Molière repeats the same ideas three or four times over, more emphatically at each repetition. "This repetition," writes Jules Lemaître, "may be carried so far that one feels the artifice." Long speeches of this character, embodying the uninterrupted development of a single idea, are not found in Bernard Shaw's plays, except in *Don Juan in Hell*, the third act of *Man and Superman*. But the same ideas are reiterated in the general conversation of the characters, in some cases in an identical form, while in others the ideas are presented under varying aspects in order to increase their propagandist influence.

Shaw's regard for realism leads him to inter-mingle burlesque and farce in his plays, in general so serious. The critics find fault with him for this, forgetting that the same thing was done by Molière, by the Elisabethan dramatists, by the writers of the medieval farces and morality plays, by Plautus, and by Aristophanes. All these writers introduce burlesque, pasquinades, and harlequinades into the satires of social custom which constitute the main purpose of their plays. So true is this of Molière that a historian of the drama has written: "Farce is the starting-point of Molière's genius; to the end

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it remains the more or less visible fulcrum of his work" (Lintilhac, *La Comédie, XVII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*). In almost all Molière's comedies, just as in almost all Shaw's plays, there is an element of farce. There is farce even in *Le Misanthrope*, just as there is farce in Shaw's fine philosophical play, *Man and Superman*.

Shaw, like Molière, makes us laugh at the fear of death. Molière does this in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and Shaw in *Arms and the Man*. Often, too, it is at sad things that Shaw, like Molière, makes us laugh. Their gaiety is tinged with sadness. "The proof of this," writes Jules Lemaître of Molière, "is to be found in the fact that our actors to-day can easily give a tragic interpretation to certain passages in his dramas." The present writer has related in this work that the same thing happened when Bernard Shaw's *Candida* was played in Paris.

In Shaw, as in Molière, we find side by side figures of farce, types of the comedy of character, and portraits of the comedy of manners. Notwithstanding this element of farce, Shaw's portraits, like those of Molière, exhibit an astonishing resemblance to their models, for Shaw knows how to depict character just as well as does Molière. We may apply to the former what Jules Lemaître has written of the latter: "All his characters, in almost every phrase they pronounce, exhibit, often brutally, their

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intimate nature. They show at every moment all that they really are." Bernard Shaw's psychology of character equals that of Molière and excels that of Ibsen. Ibsen's psychology is purely individual; he shows us individuals, not types. All the contemporary playwrights who stage real portraits likewise confine themselves to the sphere of individual psychology.

Molière gives us types of individual character, the miser, the misanthrope, the hypocrite, and a few character types of class or of caste. The types presented by Shaw are especially those of class, profession, sect, or nationality. Whereas Ibsen, dealing with individual psychology, stages individuals exactly as they are, Shaw, like Molière, must add something to nature, or, as Brunetière puts it, must surpass nature. Molière finds it necessary to do this even more than Shaw, but it is essential to the method of both, for the concretion in a personality of a mental characteristic monopolizing the personality does not exist in nature, but there does exist the concretion of characteristics of class, caste, sect, or profession. Such characters as Tartuffe, Harpagon, and Alceste are rare, but we all possess their qualities in the germ; such characters as Burgess, Croft, Ramsden, Bluntschli, and Sergius are far more frequently encountered.

In Shaw, as in Molière, tragedy borders on farce

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and succeeds abruptly to burlesque—a thing we do not find in Ibsen, in whose work there is no burlesque. Some consider *Don Juan* a tragedy, and some consider *Candida* a tragedy. In many of the plays, those of Molière just as much as those of Shaw, we find truly tragical scenes, arising in the work of both authors, either from a sudden concussion between two of the characters, or else as the outcome of some great and desperate passion. Almost always, however, the tragical note is not emphasized; we divine tragedy beneath the mask of laughter. The pathetic is kept in check by the laughable or by the farcical; our emotion ends in laughter, but it is a bitter laughter, the laughter of cynical irony. This, no doubt, is why several critics tell us that Shaw reminds them of Swift; and this is why Brunetière writes that *Le Malade Imaginaire* recalls the audacious, cynical, and violent jesting of Swift.

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Our analysis of Bernard Shaw's dramatic method showed us that this author employs the comedy of incident, of words, comparison, imitation, phraseology, and above all the comedy of ideas. An analysis of Molière's dramatic method would lead us to the same result. It is owing to this predominance in Molière's work of the comedy of ideas that his plays have been distinguished as serious comedy.

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In the contemporary drama and in the nineteenth century drama, while comedy of incident, words, phraseology, and imitation abounds, nothing is rarer than the comedy of ideas. To discover plays rich in the comedy of ideas we have to go back to Beaumarchais. Between Beaumarchais and Shaw we cannot find a single comedy, a true comedy which does not lapse into tragedy, characterized by a richness of ideas similar to that presented by the plays of these two authors and by those of Molière.

The Shavian spirit shows itself especially in the form of humour, which, as we know, consists of observation rather than of imagination. It is for this reason that humour makes us laugh and think, while wit makes us laugh only. Molière's comedies also make us think, for they, too, consist more of observation than of imagination. Molière's spirit is full of humour, and makes us think deeply. One critic has compared Shaw with Beaumarchais, because both exhibit such enormous, such superabundant wit. This comparison is at once true and false. Shaw's wit, as exemplified in the dialogues between his characters, is not far-fetched. They do not talk in facetious epigrams, as in the work of so many other authors, and even in that of Beaumarchais. It is not through the use of facetious epigrams that these conversations are witty; they make us laugh by the inversion of

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ideas, by the transposition of values, and by the light they throw upon the real, the automatic personalities. As in Molière, the epigrams deal with character and incident.

Shaw's plays make us think, as do the plays of Molière; make us think more than do those of Beaumarchais, of Plautus, or of Aristophanes. Like the Dorian comic poets, Molière and Shaw laugh with their reason. Like the Dorians, they are observant rather than imaginative; they are caustic and incisive; their wit stings (Jacques Denis, *La Comédie Grecque*, i. p. 10).

Molière and Shaw, laughing with their reason, make the audience uneasy. By the character of Harpagon the audience was astonished and disquieted, shocked by the strength and reality of the picture. Similarly, by one of Shaw's plays, *Candida*, for instance, the audience is astonished, not so much by the character-drawing as by the light thrown on the conventional social environment. This environment is revealed with so salient a reality that the impression becomes disquieting; an uneasiness is induced, and persists—unless, as soon as the first astonishment is over, the audience makes up its mind to laugh. This is what the audience did at Molière's plays, as the author desired, and this is what Shaw also desires.

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In the nineteenth century we have either the lightest of light comedies, in the form of vaudeville, or we have the serious comedies of Dumas fils, Augier, Balzac, Ibsen, Björnson, Henri Becque, and many other writers. During this period we find no comedies which are at once amusing and profound. For such we have to go back to the eighteenth century, to Beaumarchais and Le Sage, who carried on the tradition of Molière. Nineteenth century comedy is no longer serious comedy ; it is either vaudeville or melodrama. Profound criticism—severe satire of prejudices, absurdities, conventionalities—has abandoned the frankly comic form, that which always makes us laugh, to assume the form of a drama relieved only here and there by a touch of comedy which makes us smile, but does not induce the open and unrestrained laughter that was caused by the plays of Beaumarchais, and still more of Molière. Not even in the plays of Augier, Dumas fils, or Becque, not even in those of Ibsen, do we find the profound satire of wealth, capitalism, religion, politics, morality, which is scattered throughout the medieval drama, which characterizes the plays of Aristophanes, and which we find once more in the comedies of Shaw.

The medieval authors respected nothing. They dared what Molière did not dare, to attack the rich merely because they were rich. Violently and

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brutally they satirized the powerful, the rich, all those in authority; and almost always they defended the poor and the obscure, allotting to these important parts. In Shaw's plays we find the like satire of persons who exercise authority, of whatever kind. In form this satire is less brutal, less violent; but in essence it is perhaps even more forcible. Shaw, living in a free country, where the idea of liberty has permeated all minds, has been able to do what Molière could not do, living in an age of authority and under an autocratic regime.

The authors of the Middle Ages, living at a time when the extreme division of authority had greatly weakened its powers, could express their thoughts freely. Molière, unable to do this, was forced to devote himself to the criticism of social absurdities rather than of social vices. None the less, he found it possible to satirize religion in *Tartuffe*, for this play, as Brunetière shows, was an attack on religion itself, and not simply upon false devotees; he was able also to satirize social inequality in *Georges Dandin*. But Molière was hampered by restrictions far more numerous than those imposed upon Le Sage or Beaumarchais, while these authors, in their turn, were less free to express their opinion than Bernard Shaw. Thus Shaw has found it possible to return to the very



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source of comedy and to drink of its life-giving waters. His comedies are like those of Aristophanes in that they deal with everything, with every human interest. The domain of the comic poet knows no limits. With one of the characters of Terence he can say: "*Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto.*"

Like the Greek comic dramatists, like the authors of the medieval farces, *soties*, and morality plays, Bernard Shaw discusses everything in his comedies: commerce, industry, religion, morality, riches, poverty, charity, capitalism, militarism, war, colonization, politics, economic government, philosophy, literature, and art. The priest, the magistrate, the bourgeois, the aristocrat, the workman, the peasant, capitalists great and small, poor men, the artist, the philosopher, the soldier—all these figures defile before us in the comedies, which, like those of Aristophanes, those of the Middle Ages, and those of the sixteenth century, replace for their author the tribune of the Agora or the pulpit of the Church, and have just as much importance and influence as either of these ever possessed.

To Bernard Shaw, as we have seen, the Stage is a Church and a school. He returns to the view of the ancient Greeks, of whom Emil Deschanel writes: "To them the theatre was a

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kind of popular education, all the more penetrating in that it did not proclaim its educative aim, but insinuated itself by way of pleasure." In the hands of the Greek dramatists, and in the hands of the dramatists of the Middle Ages and of the sixteenth century, the theatre was a political, social, and religious weapon, just as it is in the hands of Bernard Shaw. With him, we know, the theatre is a method of instruction ; it instructs while laughing and causing laughter, but it instructs. Shaw's plays are a school of manners, just like those of Molière. This school does not work directly, by giving lectures or sermons, but indirectly, by the true and sincere exposition of the conditions of real life, stripped of all the conventional trappings which disguise and mask its reality.

To instruct is Bernard Shaw's aim. To instruct was the aim of Molière, who wrote in the preface to *Tartuffe* : " Comedy is nothing more than an ingenious poem which, in the form of pleasant lessons, reproves men's errors." But to instruct is by no means the aim of Ibsen. The Norwegian master wished to be a painter, not an educationist ; an artist, not a philosopher. This diversity of aim differentiates Shaw yet more from Ibsen, while it approximates him more closely to Molière, who wished to be a moralist. The desire of both these authors to moralize is incontestible. Essentially,

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the characters speak rather for the moral instruction of the public than in order to address their fellows upon the stage. What each character says passes over the heads of the others in order to reach the audience. This is seldom obvious, very seldom indeed, for the plays of Molière and of Shaw are not lectures. Still, it sometimes becomes obvious in the longer speeches, those embodying the development of some particular idea ; and this occurs especially in the work of Molière, as, for example, in the celebrated speech in which *Don Juan* explains the reasons for his hypocrisy.

Molière was the censor of the vices of individuals ; Shaw is the censor of the vices of society. Of Shaw, as of Molière, we may say with Bolieu :—

Et ta plus burlesque parole  
Est souvent un docte sermon.

M. Lintilhac regards Molière as the most social of poets. Of Shaw we may say the same. Both castigate conventional manners with a laugh. The laughter which both induce is a punishment which they inflict, and which they compel the audience to inflict with them, upon the society of their time—a punishment for certain disharmonies between that society and reason. Their laughter and the laughter they induce make manifest the illogicality, irrationality, and absurdity of the worldly or social conventions, of the social laws and principles, which

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are fragmentarily symbolized in the various characters.

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Since true comedy concerns itself with general considerations, the writers of comedy are naturally led to create types, syntheses of individual characters, professional characters, characters of caste, sect, or nation. These types then symbolize the profession, class, nation, or sect of which they are the complete or partial synthesis. But in addition to this symbolization of concrete realities, if I may use the term, we have also a symbolization of abstract ideas, a personification of ideas—in a word, allegory. This was dear to Aristophanes, and the Middle Ages were extremely fond of it. It is certainly found in the work of Molière, and when we were giving the argument of some of Shaw's plays we saw how frequently it is met with in these. This symbolization of ideas must be regarded as a necessary outcome of the desire of the writer of comedy to play the part of moralist.

It is very remarkable that, notwithstanding the differences of era and social environment which separate Molière and Shaw, there are numerous common features in these writers' criticisms of manners. Both love youth better than age. When showing the struggles between parents and children both of them make fun of the parents, the old

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people, and frankly take the side of the children, simply because these latter are young, outspoken, filled with the joy of life. Shaw shares the view of Molière, who, according to Jules Lemaître, considered "that youth has more to lose than to gain from the dry lessons of parents, parents who come in opportunely to talk about the teachings of experience."

The whole of Molière's drama is nothing more than a campaign against hypocrisy—hypocrisy in love, in friendship, in conventional life, in human relationships in general. It is just the same with the dramas of Shaw, who wages war in especial against the hypocrisy of social conventions, of laws, of education. So vigorously does he fight against hypocrisy that he conjures us into sympathizing with Mrs. Warren, whose profession, hypocritically despised, is no more noxious than many others which are held in honour. "To transport truth from the world to the stage, truth and the whole truth, nature and the whole of nature—such was Molière's aim, and this is what he did." These words of M. Faguet apply just as well to Bernard Shaw, whose dramas constitute one long-continued protest, in forms however varied, against the romanticism which gives rise to hypocrisy in love, against the idealism which gives rise to hypocrisy in politics, and against all the conventions of social

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life. Shaw, like Molière, is the least romantic of men ; and his work is the most anti-romantic we possess.

Shaw has a hatred of lying, and he attacks it unceasingly, just as does Ibsen. Like Gregers Werle in *The Wild Duck*, he might say : " It is better to destroy happiness than to base happiness upon a lie." But what distinguishes Shaw so markedly from Ibsen is his versatility. He leaps from idea to idea, presenting them in diversified ways, passing quickly from one to another, then back to the first, and so on. Ibsen, on the other hand, is unceasingly painstaking. His touch is heavy ; he wishes to demonstrate a proposition and he lets us know it, whereas Shaw demonstrates his proposition without letting us see what he is about. Ibsen, moreover, in his social censure, never gets more than half-way. To a large extent the social causes of the vices of individuals elude him ; an exception must be made, however, for the principle of authority, whose noxious character he has thoroughly grasped and admirably exposed.

But Bernard Shaw has seen into the very depths of the social organism. A clever anatomist and physiologist, he has dissected it all, and understands the whole mechanism. This is why his social censure is so profound and scientifically exact. The difference between these two writers in the pro-

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fundity of their social criticism is partly dependent upon the fact that in politics Ibsen was a Radical, while Shaw is a Socialist. Necessarily the criticism of the Socialist deals with social causes, while that of the Radical concerns itself with individuals.

Just as in Molière's time anatomists and physiologists could not freely study and dissect the human body, so Molière could not freely dissect the social life of his day. This is why his social censure, though profound, is less profound than that of Bernard Shaw. The Shavian drama, moreover, while it is akin to the drama of Molière, differs enormously from the work of contemporary playwrights, even when the writings of these are permeated with the criticism of social conventions. For such criticism, even when given us by writers of real talent, like Mirbeau, Brieux, and Emile Fabre, is much less penetrating than that of Shaw, because it remains superficial, attacking laws only, and not the very foundations of capitalist society.

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It has been said of the comedies of Aristophanes and also of those of Molière that they are a school of disrespect. Our study of Shaw's plays has shown us that they, too, constitute a school of disrespect. They always exhibit worldly, social, and religious conventions as being conquered by nature. In all the plays everything circles round a single

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idea, and this is that nature invariably gets the upper hand of all the conventions, social, worldly, or religious.

How can we sum up the philosophy of Molière? It is, according to Brunetière, "the philosophy of nature, the free play of instinct, opposition to every kind of coercion; Molière's supreme æsthetic and moral lesson is that we must submit, must conform, to nature." But this is also the philosophy of Shaw, who tells us, like Molière, that we must follow nature. Both these dramatists make us laugh at the prejudices and conventions that are overcome by nature.

Bernard Shaw's plays are, as we have seen, frankly determinist. The author displays his characters as having their actions or their thoughts determined by the complex influences of the environment in which he places them—ancestral, family, educative, social, climatic, regional, economic, and political influences. Bernard Shaw's drama is scientific, for to all men of science it is to-day a matter of complete demonstration that freewill is a universal illusion. (See *Déterminisme et Responsabilité*, by A. Hamon, Paris, 1898. English translation, *The Universal Illusion of Free-Will and Criminal Responsibility*, London, 1898.) Determinism, moreover, is the general tendency of contemporary drama: it



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characterizes the work of Ibsen, Brieux, Hervieu, de Curel, Björnson, and Mirbeau. It is not at first obvious that the work of Molière is determinist; but it seems to me that this author's view that we must submit to nature, that nature overcomes all the conventions, is a form of determinism.

However this may be, the determinism of Shaw's work is chiefly social; or rather, Shaw, more than any other contemporary writer, throws into light the determinism of social influences—that is to say, of the economic and political conditions of the social environment in which his characters move. I may recall, in this connection, the statements of Mrs. Warren, Sartorius, Napoleon, Bluntschli, and John Tanner. This clear and categorical expression of the fact that the actions of the characters are determined, differentiates the Shavian drama from the work of other contemporary playwrights and from that of the dramatists of the nineteenth century. For these writers never display their determinism to the audience, and without a very close study of the plays we might believe that the characters possessed absolute freedom of will. An exception, in this respect, must be made in favour of the plays of Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg.

The determinism of these Scandinavian masters is, however, somewhat different from the determinism of Shaw. The latter's is above all social,

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the reason being that he writes comedies with the aim of a reformer—a social reformer. Ibsen and Strindberg, when displaying the determination of thoughts and actions, give the predominant influence to the ancestral conditions of the characters, to their individual state, independently of the social environment in which they live. The determinism of Ibsen and Strindberg is mainly psychological and individual, because the reform at which these writers aim is mainly an individual reform.

In these plays the Destiny of the great Greek tragedians yields place to the diverse conditions of the environment in which the characters and their ancestors move and are moved. But whether we have to do with the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides, with the plays of Shakespeare, Ibsen, or of Shaw, always what must be must be, always the characters must submit to their inevitable destiny. In tragedies, however, and especially in the works of Sophocles, we see the individual vainly revolting against his destiny, or lamenting his fate. Destiny is wrong, but triumphs; and the protests of the characters are those of fruitless despair. In the comedies of Shaw destiny is right, and its triumph is good. What must be must be, and it is of no avail to lament, or to fight desperately against the inevitable. What we have to do is to look our destiny

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in the face, to understand clearly what it is, and to make the best possible use of it. What we have to do is to submit to the environmental conditions, both adapting ourselves to them and adapting them to our own aims, within the limits of what is possible. But whatever we do, we are inevitably subject to our destiny. Nothing shows this more clearly than the amusing pursuit of Tanner by Ann, the hunting of Valentine by Gloria.

In Shaw's plays love is all-powerful, its working inevitable. When Woman has made up her mind no man can possibly escape the snares of love. Woman is a hunter of men, in order to satisfy the instinct of sexual attraction, to satisfy the Life-Force.

It is remarkable that the early plays similarly depict women as hunters of men. In these poems, as M. Lintilhac says, the lady takes the galant with a quite epic boldness.

Alone among contemporary playwrights Strindberg has the same idea as Shaw, that woman is a hunter, one designed by nature to lead men captive. But whereas Strindberg, the misogynist, exhibits this idea in a tragic and painful form, regarding woman's triumph as bad, Shaw, whose plays are philogynist, exhibits the idea in an amusing and agreeable form, for to him woman's triumph is good.

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For this reason in the Shavian drama woman plays an extremely important part, perhaps the leading part, for she almost invariably triumphs. In this matter, Shaw surpasses Ibsen, although the latter gives woman a higher place than she occupies in the work of any other contemporary or nineteenth century dramatist.

Shaw's dramas, like those of Ibsen, are feminist in tendency.

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Bernard Shaw's plays are meliorist, although the writer is a severe critic of the existing capitalist order. They are meliorist like the plays of Molière, and like the plays, generally speaking, of all writers of comedy.

Meliorism is the usual state of mind of the comic dramatist, whereas the writers of tragedy are commonly pessimists. Shaw's meliorism differentiates him profoundly from Ibsen and from Strindberg, for these latter are resolutely pessimist, not only as regards existing society, but also as regards that of to-morrow.

Ibsen's work is that of an austere and dissatisfied thinker. Shaw's work is that of an austere thinker, but one content with life. In life, everything can work out satisfactorily. We must know how to take life, how to make the best possible use of it, how to accommodate ourselves to what we have,

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while trying to get better things—and this effort is always to our advantage. To turn established institutions as fully as possible to our own interest, such is the lesson of Shaw's meliorism. From this point of view Shaw is the philosopher of common sense. When he strips society and individuals of the veils of convention, displaying the genuine reality of men and of things, he speaks the language of common sense. Here also he reminds us of Molière, who, according to Mr. Walkley, is the great dramatic interpreter of the philosophy of common sense. It is wrong to regard the philosophy of common sense as anathema for Shaw, unless we speak of common sense as something other than the faculty of taking a sane and healthy view of men and things, and of seeing what they really are. Molière had this faculty in a very high degree, and Shaw has it no less.

The morality of Molière's plays was opposed to the traditional and current morality of his own time, for he fought against constraint and discipline of all kinds, and fought for marriages of love. A similar morality is found in Shaw's plays. Their morality is never traditional or current, but is always opposed to everyday views; for these are deeply tinged with romance, falsified by romance, whereas Shaw's morality is based upon things as they really are. Shaw, like Molière, envelops his morality in

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the manifold embroideries of comedy, and sometimes in those of burlesque, and this is why so many people fail to recognize that he has a morality at all. But it is there none the less. So light-hearted is it, that this Shavian morality charms even those whose privileges it seeks to demolish—for it is essentially revolutionary, like that of Beaumarchais, whose plays directed such rude blows against the *ancien régime*.

The revolutionary spirit of Beaumarchais is more obvious than was that of Molière, and yet the tendency of Molière's plays is thoroughly subversive, perhaps even more subversive than was the tendency of Beaumarchais. The revolutionary spirit of Shaw is as conspicuous as was that of Beaumarchais, and is more whole-hearted; it is more far-reaching even than was that of Molière. Like Rabelais, Montaigne, Molière, Voltaire, Diderot, the Encyclopædists, Proudhon, and the Socialist and Anarchist thinkers of the nineteenth century, Shaw marches boldly forwards towards a progressive future. Such writers as these have moulded or will mould the social conditions of a day subsequent to their own; they have destroyed or will destroy the social conditions of their own time. Their works constitute stages in the unending advance of our race.

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In Bernard Shaw's comedies, as in those of Molière, we do not encounter any exceptional beings. The characters represent on the whole such persons as we meet in ordinary life ; and even when they are caricatured we easily perceive the ordinary individual beneath the mask. Moreover, while tragedy is well adapted for the portrayal of exceptional or pathological beings, it is otherwise with comedy. In Shaw, therefore, as in Molière, in Plautus, and in Aristophanes, the persons of the drama are those of individuals with whom we rub shoulders day by day. They are mentally healthy, normal, people just like every one else. As a rule, if they do differ from the normal, it is by excess and not by defect. They are, if I may phrase it thus, more normal than the normal. This type of character is found in the Shavian drama ; the case of Tanner may be instanced.

In most cases we find a little of this super-normality in the mental composition of a number of the characters. But super-normality is not abnormality ; and no more in Shaw's plays than in those of the great earlier writers of comedy do we find such abnormal and pathological beings as we encounter in tragic drama—such figures as those of whom Shakespeare offers us so admirable a gallery, equalled only by the selection of tragic figures which move through the plays of Ibsen. Ibsen's

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leading characters are persons mentally ailing, morbid beings, more or less insane. He gives us almost typical cases of paralytic dementia, melancholia, puerperal psychosis, suicidal mania. In Strindberg's work we encounter the same abnormal types, although somewhat less extensively.

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In the course of our study of Bernard Shaw's plays we have seen that the love by which his female characters are inspired has always a maternal tinge. The love of the senses is intermingled with the desire to protect, and the former is sometimes completely effaced by the latter. This characteristic is peculiar to Shaw, for we do not find it either in contemporary dramatists or in the dramatists of earlier days. Another distinctive feature of Shaw's plays, by which they are differentiated from the work of his contemporaries and from that of the nineteenth century playwrights, is the almost complete absence of adultery. In this, once again, he recalls Molière, whose plays hardly ever deal with adultery.

Another feature in which Shaw's work reminds us of Molière's is the parody of the servant by the master. We encounter this in *Le Dépit Amoureux*, in *Amphitryon*, and in *Man and Superman*. But it is probable that this is a mere means to produce a comic effect ; whereas in the practice shared by



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Molière and Shaw of giving important rôles to persons belonging to the common people there is a revolutionary aim. Vauvenargues has even blamed Molière for this, regarding it as in questionable taste. Molière's maid-servants are famous, his valets no less so. They often represent common sense; and they help in the victory of nature, in the defeat of convention by instinct.

In Shaw's comedies, the common people play an extremely important part. They nearly always see the reality of things because their vision is not obscured by convention. In Shaw members of the common people play the part that was often played by the slave in the Greek and Roman comedies; in the medieval drama, too, the ordinary folk, the peasants and the artisans, were allotted an important and pleasing part. Shaw presents servants, waiters, a chauffeur, on the same level as their masters. He makes the servants the masters' equals—a thing which no nineteenth century playwright ventured to do, not even Ibsen, in whose plays the members of the common people are persons of no importance.

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The critics have blamed Shaw for revealing himself behind his characters, for uttering his own ideas under their names and by their voices. The same reproach cannot be made against Ibsen, for this

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author does not appear in his characters. But it has been levelled at Aristophanes, Euripides, Molière, and Beaumarchais. The writers of comedy, and sometimes the writers of tragedy, as for instance Euripides, are always open to this charge when they attempt to moralize. Yet we must remember that this practice is an inherent necessity of their moralizing aim. Comedy desires to moralize, and since it no longer makes use either of the chorus or of the parabasis (digression) of the Greek comedy, it must avail itself of dialectical characters who have hardly any bearing on the material action but are profoundly important to the intellectual action of the play.

To the comic dramatists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries monologue proved a practical substitute for the parabasis. Now, however, since the monologue may be said to be obsolete, Shaw, in order to secure the same effect as that produced by the parabasis, in order, that is to say, to set forth his own ideas, his criticism of public affairs, manners and customs, philosophy, etc., has been obliged to have recourse to a number of characters, the *coryphæi* of his plays, who, in a wonderful dialogue, and fragmentarily, express the author's ideas.

Bernard Shaw's style is finely and subtly logical, recalling that of Voltaire, Renan, or Anatole

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France ; it is sometimes torrential, like that of Scarron, and always appropriate to the character, like that of Molière ; it is natural, pithy, and exhibits here and there a deliberate ordinariness, like that of Ibsen. Shaw is ironical, caustic, sardonic, amusing like Rabelais, paradoxical to an extent which would give points to Jean-Jacques Rousseau or Proudhon, and endowed with an extraordinarily fantastic imagination, like Beaumarchais. All these characteristics combine to form a mixture with a flavour of its own, which is that neither of Molière, Beaumarchais, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Renan, nor Proudhon. It has its own peculiar aroma, which charms, pleases, recreates and instructs, amuses and gives food for thought. To sum all up in a word, it is Bernard Shaw.

In the twentieth century, Shaw has revived the literary, philosophic, and revolutionary drama of Molière and of Beaumarchais. By doing so he has reintroduced serious comedy, which has disappeared for more than a century. This resurrection, on its way to revolutionize dramatic technique, disturbs, shocks, and offends the misoneist critics. Everywhere they give Shaw the welcome which they formerly gave Molière, calling him a burlesque author, a hero of farce, the leading buffoon of his time. Thus did the critics receive Molière, whose *L'Avare*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Les Femmes Savantes*,

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*L'Ecole des Femmes*, were at first failures. Thus did they receive Beaumarchais, whose *Le Barbier de Séville* was stigmatized a failure, a play devoid of plan, unity, character, or plot, and totally lacking in comedy. Thus did they receive Ibsen, every one of whose plays raised a storm even in his own land. But just as Molière, Beaumarchais, and Ibsen made their way irresistibly because of the intrinsic greatness of their work, so also has Shaw irresistibly made his way in the Anglo-Germanic, Scandinavian, and Slav worlds. In France, the recognition of Shaw has already begun. In Paris, the productions of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, in 1912, and *You Never Can Tell*, in 1913, introduced Shaw more fully than before to the theatre-going world; but his work has not as yet in France obtained definitive success, as it has in Italy. Yet it cannot be doubted that in France, Italy, and Spain, Shaw will harvest even greater successes than he has known elsewhere in Europe, and this precisely because of the qualities which so much recall those of our own Molière.

## CHAPTER VII

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS ON DRAMATIC ART EXEMPLIFIED WITH REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF BERNARD SHAW

IN view of the essential differences between comedy and tragedy, what will be the necessary result of these differences as affecting the structure, the style, and the characters in comedy?

Comedy generalizes, and therefore the events with which a comedy deals are valueless taken by themselves. The value they possess, the interest they arouse, derive from the light which is thrown upon the relationship which these incidents bear to society, and to life in general. Consequently, a comedy is not, as is a tragedy, the representation of the development of a passion, but it is the evaluation of the consequences of such a passion (be it good or be it bad) when it has attained its full development. As a further consequence the comedy does not display to us the development of the characters; it makes no attempt to stage their genesis; it presents them to us just

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as they are when fully formed. It is for this reason that comedy never deals exclusively with love, and that we even find that in comedy love never plays a leading part. What we find is that comedy deals with avarice, jealousy, absent-mindedness, education, the relations between parents and children, boastfulness, political or social criticism.

Thus the incidents in a comedy are not its true subject, but merely the framework for the display of that subject. The action, the plot, are of secondary importance, and the comic dramatist need concern himself very little about them. The result is that comedy presents the superficial aspect of a series of disconnected tableaux ; its situations verge upon absurdity ; its plot is of rudimentary simplicity.

Seeing that comedy has to illustrate the relationships between events and between individuals, divers incidents have to be staged and the number of the situations has to be increased in such a manner as to display the characters of the persons of the drama in various and sometimes in contradictory situations. As a further consequence of this necessity, the situations are subordinated to the characters.

Comedy must present, and, in fact, does present, these characteristics. This has been recognized by

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all serious critics of the comedy of characters and of ideas, by all serious critics of the works of Aristophanes and Plautus, of the medieval mysteries and farces, of the plays of Ben Jonson, Molière, Holberg, Le Sage, and Beaumarchais. Of Ben Jonson they write, "the plot is merely a framework for the setting of the characters"; of Molière, "the situations are subordinated to the characters—the staging is puerile, artificial, and absurd, the play is a succession of tableaux, there is no action." But it is in appearance only that the comedy is a succession of disconnected tableaux. In reality, these tableaux are closely interconnected, not by the incidents of the plot but by the characters or the ideas, or by both of these. The interconnection is so intimate that it is impossible to make any cuts from a well-written comedy without affecting the integrity of the characters or of the ideas.

We have seen, moreover, that however incoherent may seem the material action of a well-planned comedy, its intellectual action (if it exposes a thesis) or its psychological action (if it depicts characters) is perfectly coherent. Try to make any cuts from a comedy by Ben Jonson, Molière, Holberg, or Bernard Shaw, and you will always find that you can do this only at the expense of the characters and of the ideas. Try, for instance, to cut some-

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thing from *You Never Can Tell*. You will soon find that if you cut a passage from the third act, you will have to make another cut in the first act; this excision will necessitate yet another; and so on, until there is nothing left. It all holds together with an inseparable coherence.

When *You Never Can Tell* was played at the Théâtre des Arts in January 1913 some of those who were shocked by the buffoonery of the fourth act advised that this act should be omitted, or at least that its more farcical portions should be excised. They failed to see that this act, with all the farce which it contains, is essential to the description of the characters, and to the conclusion of the various ideas expounded in the three acts which precede.

In this play, as in all of Shaw's dramatic work, as in that of all the great comic dramatists, the scenes are interconnected, not by the incidents but by the development of the ideas and of the characters. In these latter respects there is so harmonious a progress that excisions are impossible. It is precisely because the scenes are so strictly interconnected that the name of light comedy, which some have wished to apply to his work, is, in fact, inapplicable. In light comedy we have a succession of disconnected scenes. One of these may be cut, and the piece remains a whole,



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just as amusing as before. There has been no loss of force in the ideas or in the depiction of the characters. Herein lies the great distinction between light comedy and comedy proper or serious comedy, which aims at diffusing enlightenment by the description of characters and by the criticism of social customs and institutions.

\* \* \* \* \*

In pursuit of its generalizing aim, comedy must exhibit average humanity, that of such people as we encounter every day, and comedy must therefore be realist. The comic dramatist must make his characters speak in accordance with nature and truth ; he must guard against staging absolute types of vice or of virtue, for such types have no real existence. Consequently he is led to exhibit persons whose actions, sentiments, and ideas are contradictory. These contradictions are all the more frequent because the writer has had to multiply the situations in order to show the characters in as many different circumstances as possible. This is what we note in the comic writers of all ages, in the work of Plautus just as much as in that of Bernard Shaw. As a further consequence of the necessary realism of comedy, the comic dramatist must not recoil from triviality or even from coarseness ; the *dénouements* of comedy are haphazard, for they are commonly

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introduced merely in order to bring the play to an end.

Comedy is a realist tableau of manners. Hence the comic dramatist is unable to express his own views directly, but must impartially exhibit the pros and the cons. He does not force a solution upon the audience, but gives a picture of reality, and leaves the spectators to draw their own conclusions. This is why, even to-day, the precise meaning of such comedies as *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan*, and *Le Misanthrope* remains open to discussion. The comedies of all ages allow the audience to draw the moral; it is left to modern authors, working with the bastard instrument of melodrama, to state the moral in plain terms.

But these are not all the consequences of the necessary realism of comedy. Despite the superficial variety of expression in the individual characters and from character to character, we note, in the different comedies of the same author (Plautus, Molière, Holberg, and Bernard Shaw, for example), a certain recurrent uniformity in the types of character displayed. If, indeed, in actual life, you will trouble to observe with great care a number of persons engaged in discussion or conversation, you will note an extraordinary variety in the intonations, whereby are expressed in rapid succession the divers states of mind through which these

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persons are passing, as the conversation or discussion gives rise in their minds to varied sentiments and induces manifold reflections. The comic dramatist, essentially realist, must make his characters speak just as they would in real life, and must show how they vary in tone from moment to moment. But, further, when we observe life carefully, when we study the society in which we live, when we examine humanity, it is not difficult to ascertain that human beings do not exhibit an infinite variety of characters and conversations. All, however various, may be referred to a comparatively limited number of types of individuals who exhibit certain common characteristics, and it is these types, this average humanity, which comedy desires to portray. Thus, in pursuit of his realist aim, the comic dramatist, passing from one play to another, repeats characters, passages, and phrases. The commentators have pointed this out in Ben Jonson, in Molière, and in Holberg. They will find the same thing in all comedies, written in all ages.

Comedy deals with types, and not with individuals, and this is why it shows us characters ready-made, and does not exhibit their development. In tragedy, on the other hand, where the characters are individuals and not synthetic types, the development of these characters is shown to the

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spectator. For this reason the type-figures of comedy appear to be puppets, well jointed it is true, but still puppets. This impression, which is given by the comedies of Ben Jonson, Molière, Holberg, and Shaw, is sometimes accentuated by the uniformity of types which runs through the different works of the same comic dramatist, where we find, as a rule, the same characters, or rather the same types, exhibited with varying aspects. In a word, as in natural science, we have to do with genera displaying varieties and sub-varieties. It was this uniformity, arising in part from realism and in part from the necessity for generalization, which led Schlegel to say that Molière was of the school of uniformity, whereas (and this is perfectly true) in Shakespeare's plays we do not find two souls alike.

Comedy presents characters realistically, and the consequence is that the comic dramatist is apt to exhibit a collection of knaves and fools. We see this in Plautus, Ben Jonson, Molière, Holberg, Le Sage, and Bernard Shaw. It results, further, that the characters are not consistent, but that they say one thing and do another—that they display sudden and violent contradictions. We are often struck with this in the comedies of Plautus, Molière, Holberg, and Shaw.

The aim of comedy is to make us think and to

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make us laugh, not to move us to pathos. But if ~~we are to be made to think~~, the comedy must present ideas, must expose theses, whilst sentiment must be absent or thrust into the background. Hence pathos is greatly restricted in comedy; so much so as often to shock the audience accustomed to tragedy, whose leading aim is to induce the sentiment of pathos. Inasmuch as comedy is to present ideas and to expose life as it really is, it must concern itself with the criticism of manners and institutions, with social criticism, and sometimes with the criticism of any prevalent views. This satire need not necessarily be expressed in any other way than by the discussions among the characters. In the work of Aristophanes, Plautus, Molière, Ben Jonson, Holberg, Le Sage, Beaumarchais, and Shaw we may note that the incidents that are introduced serve only to reanimate the discussion.

People may be made to think by the exposition and discussion of ideas, but they may also be made to think by the exposition of characters. Hence there seem to be two varieties of comedy: the psychological comedy, which studies a vice or a passion (jealousy, absent-mindedness, avarice, hypocrisy, misanthropy, boastfulness); and politico-social comedy, or comedy of ideas, which is a satire of society, of its customs,

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of its institutions. Thus the plays of Aristophanes, of Plautus, of Ben Jonson, of Molière, and of Holberg, some of those of Le Sage, and those of Beaumarchais and Bernard Shaw, exhibit in varying degrees these two varieties of comedy. Moreover, it is for the convenience of his own exposition that the present writer distinguishes between these two varieties of comedy, for in reality all comedies share more or less in the characteristics of both kinds, the only difference being as to the proportions in which social satire and the depiction of characters are intermingled. Always in these comedies of character and of social satire we find conversations, controversies, and discussions, which undergo a natural development to the detriment of the action; and this has often led the critics to point out as a defect in the work of a comic dramatist that which is merely a necessity of his particular art.

Some have believed that it was possible to write a comedy by marshalling ideas, characters, and fiction—that is to say, by developing these three elements of a dramatic work in a coherent fashion, and giving them all an equal importance. The preceding analysis will have sufficed to show that this is impossible. No one can point to any comedy in which the development of the ideas and of the characters has not been effected at the expense of

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the fiction of the play. Fiction developed logically and with coherence is found only in tragedy and melodrama. Moreover, the fact that such a genius as Molière (or Shaw), and that other great writers of comedy, such as Plautus, Ben Jonson, and Holberg, have failed to write comedies in which the fiction was developed in a concise and logical manner, serves, no less than the theoretical analysis that has been made here, to show that the thing is impossible.

Comedy gives a realist picture of characters and customs. It follows, as already pointed out, that the comic dramatist must not recoil from the trivial and even from the coarse, if the environment he is describing itself contains coarse or trivial elements. The language of comedy must approximate as closely as possible to the language of current speech, to that of conversation as it actually takes place. Does this mean that the writer should furnish a precisely detailed photograph of such conversation? Not at all, since for the stage he must concentrate, condense, compress into brief moments the events, ideas, characters, and conversations whose occurrence in real life occupies a much longer period. If the writer were to produce conversations as they actually occur, the audience would be intensely bored by the prolixity, by the extraordinarily frequent repetitions of

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phrases, words, and ideas. Hence the language must be somewhat different from that which is actually heard in drawing-rooms, studios, public meetings, or the street. But the difference between the language of comedy and the current tongue must not take the form of a correction of the colloquial errors of the latter. All that is requisite is a concentration and a condensation of the substance, while the colloquial errors are preserved intact.

A comedy must not be written in a literary style, for it would then fail to represent life, whereas the representation of life is the essential aim of the comic dramatist. Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence, Ben Jonson, Molière, Holberg, Le Sage, Beaumarchais, Shaw—none of these writers made a point of writing well, or writing in a literary style. On the contrary, they claimed to write realistically. We have a striking proof of this in the fact that when the men of the twentieth century wish to ascertain the current speech of their Greek, Latin, English, French, Danish forefathers, they do not study the works of the tragic, but those of the comic dramatists. From this point of view, comedy is a storehouse of the current tongue, of the everyday language as it was spoken at the date when the comedy was written.

Brunetière has well said that comedy is not the



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place for an organic style—a style constructed in accordance with fixed rules. Molière, the master of all comic dramatists, carefully avoided making his characters speak a literary language. Hence Fénélon, La Bruyère, Bayle, Vauvenargues have blamed him for writing badly, for failing to avoid slang and barbarous expressions. The accusation is just, but Molière's action in this respect was deliberate, for he was a writer of comedies and therefore a realist. We need only study the works of Aristophanes, Plautus, John Heywood, Ben Jonson, Molière, Holbert, and Shaw to recognize that it is the realism of these writers which leads them into triviality and coarseness. They were representing the manners of their time, and often the manners of the common people; and when they wrote, the common people, and even the professedly refined were apt to be extremely coarse. Comedy, therefore, does not hesitate to reproduce argot, the jargons of professions and of classes, the local dialects.

The essential aim of the comic dramatist is to instruct people by making them think. He is naturally led to speak of abstract ideas, and, to make his audience understand, he employs comparisons drawn from everyday life. He does this partly as a realist, and partly in order to induce a comic impression.

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For the same reason he is forced to employ paradox. Paradox, whether as the expression of an opinion contrary to that generally received, or as a new method of representing some idea already established, or as the support of some accepted principle by means of arguments which might have been supposed inapplicable—paradox is very commonly employed by all the comic dramatists. The reason is that paradox is an extremely concise method of expression, and comedy demands conciseness, to strengthen the effect upon the audience of the ideas it conveys and the traits of character it represents. Paradox, by the vigour of its attack, we might almost say by the violence and brutality of its attack, forces itself upon the attention of the audience, and thus enlightens them all the more surely. Finally, paradox is always more or less amusing, and never fails to produce a smile.

It often happens that the paradoxes of a certain epoch are no longer paradoxical in later times, and for this reason the paradoxical character of the work of earlier comic dramatists is often overlooked. But the contemporary critics did not fail to note the paradoxes, nor to blame the dramatists for their use, being themselves unable to perceive that since the aim of the comic dramatists was to improve the manners and enlighten the minds of their contemporaries, they

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found it essential to employ paradox in the expression of their social satire. In the same way the comic dramatist makes use of irony, so closely allied to paradox. Irony is not understood by every one, and it often escapes the audience or the reader. This has been made evident to me in the case of the Shavian comedy. German criticism, for example, does not understand the refined irony of *Arms and the Man* concerning the professional soldier. While speaking of Germany we may note in passing as an interesting and characteristic fact that German literature possesses no comedies—if we except the work of Kotzebue. The so-called comedies of Lessing are in truth melodramas. Yet Holberg, subsequently Molière, and in our own epoch Shaw, have had a brilliant success in Germany. In the case of Holberg and of Shaw the success was so great that the critics claimed these authors as German dramatists! The German public loves comedy, and yet there are no comic dramatists in Germany. In my opinion this phenomenon must be attributed to the lack of liberty in German laws and customs. As we know, comedy lives by social criticism, and social criticism is impossible except in a free regime.

It is because the aim of comedy is to make the audience laugh and think simultaneously that the comic dramatist is led to make use of farce and

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of burlesque. When he travesties nature, when he deforms it, he departs a little from realism, to produce an effect which intensifies the mirth of the audience and induces bursts of open laughter. By exaggerating, by over-drawing, his characters, his situations, and even in many cases the expression of his ideas, he accentuates the ridicule he is levelling at individuals or at professional or social types. He thus strengthens the satirical vigour of his attack.

When exaggeration is continued throughout entire scenes and is applied to a whole group of characters the result is what is known as farce, the dramatic method so characteristic of the theatre of old in England, France, and Italy. We meet with farce in the comedies of all times, and even in the most profound of the comedies of Molière and Shaw. Farce is introduced because it is necessary. The more profound the comedy, the more definitely it aims at a reform of manners, the more will it stimulate the audience to think. But then there will be needed an oasis from time to time, to give the audience a rest, and such oases are constituted by the farcical incidents with which the comic dramatist intersperses his play. In the analysis of comedies we shall note as a rule that a profound and serious scene is followed by one that is lightly witty, or farcical. The author wishes to arrest the

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sentiment of pathos which was about to arise in the audience, for if the emotions become too deeply involved the intellectual grasp of the satire becomes impossible.

Farce, exaggeration, and burlesque, with which all comedies are interspersed, are pleasing to the general public, but often displeasing to people with pretensions to culture, to the æsthetes and dilettantists whose refined sensibilities are offended, and who exclaim against the author's want of taste. But the populace discerns no lack of taste. Thus in the seventeenth century it was from the pit that came the frank applause for Molière's plays, just as it was from the pit that came the applause for Ben Jonson, for the classical comedies, for the mediæval farces and mystery plays, and for the comedies of Holberg, Le Sage, and Beaumarchais. A striking proof of this is furnished by what happens in Paris when Molière is played at some theatre of the faubourgs—Bobino, for instance ; here the crowd roars with laughter at passages which at the Comédie Française would not provoke even a smile. The common people give frank expression to their immediate feelings. An additional proof of this is that the scene of the masked ball in *You Never Can Tell* shocks the stalls while the gallery always applauds it vociferously.

We must not ask every one to like comedy.

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Some of our finest imaginative writers have found it repugnant. To Théophile Gautier, for example, its beauties were inaccessible. To enjoy comedy to the full, at least in its more comic aspects, one must be more or less of the people. Otherwise the comic parts will greatly diminish the pleasure that might have been derived from the serious and profound parts of the comedy. Yet without this comic relief the comedy would be a black, painful, and horribly bitter tragedy. The comedy, and, above all, the farce, is what redeems the satire; it is the sugar which coats the pill.

\* \* \* \* \*

The whole world of critics has been aroused by the application to Bernard Shaw of the title of "The Twentieth Century Molière." There has been a general chorus of protestation: "There is nothing of Molière in Bernard Shaw. . . . There is absolutely no resemblance between the two. . . . M. Hamon exaggerates, and it is absurd to label Bernard Shaw with a name so inexact and so arrogant. . . . It is true that Bernard Shaw is a master of dramatic art, but to compare him with Molière, the inimitable, is to transcend the limits of reasonable praise. . . . M. Hamon cannot seriously believe that Bernard Shaw ranks with Molière."

Yes, and again yes, it is my serious opinion that

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Bernard Shaw ranks with Molière, and that he is *at least* Molière's equal. The question deserves careful examination, and I cannot accept as disproof of the justice of my views the simple affirmations of the critics who have made no attempt to show the erroneousness of the reasoning which has led me to speak of Shaw as a modern Molière.

Some will doubtless say: "What is the use of a discussion of this kind? Let us leave the matter to our descendants. It is only when the lapse of long years permits a distant prospect that an author can be classed." To which I make answer that the work of the critic is precisely to class authors in this way. He must analyse, must dissect the work of art, must give it its place in history, after tracing its origin. It is not the business of the critic to register public opinion, but to show the public the motive of his own admiration, to point out the road along which public opinion should march; he should give reasons why the public ought to admire or condemn.

From the noise that was made when I suggested a kinship between Molière and Bernard Shaw it would seem that a work of art, of whatever kind, must be the product of spontaneous generation, having no relationship whatever with the works of art that have preceded it! But this is not so.

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In every country the technique of Shaw's plays seemed strange to the critics, for it had no resemblance to the technique of the plays which they were accustomed to see. This, at least, is incontestible. Hence arises the dilemma : either Bernard Shaw created his technique *de novo*, or else he borrowed it from earlier writers, imitating them more or less closely.

According to the former notion, Bernard Shaw must have been a genius altogether without parallel. In fact, he must have been a god, for he created a new technique without any pre-existing elements. Profound as is my admiration for the author of numerous masterpieces, it does not rise to this level. We are thrown back, therefore, upon the latter idea. This involves the disadvantage of a certain reduction in our estimate of Bernard Shaw's genius, even if, by a study of his dramatic work, we are led to compare him with the greatest of his predecessors. This view has also the inappreciable advantage of being within the sphere of reality, of being within the limits of possible truth, for it establishes an affiliation between the art of Bernard Shaw and the art of his predecessors—such an affiliation as has existed throughout the history of art.

“Affiliation,” writes Goethe, “has always existed in art. . . . If you study the work of a great



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master, you will invariably find that he has made use of some of the qualities of his predecessors, and that it is precisely on this account that he has become great." This is perfectly logical. A work of art must strike its roots in the pre-existing artistic soil. The artist's genius consists in utilizing the qualities displayed in the work of earlier artists, to which he adds something of his own, so as to increase the collective fund upon which his successors will draw. To quote Goethe once more: "Whatever we do, we are collective beings. . . . We all receive help from others."

What is the affiliation of Bernard Shaw's dramatic art? To find the answer to this question we must make a careful analysis of his plays, and having discovered their chief characteristics we must study the work of earlier writers in order to find plays exhibiting similar characteristics. Such an analysis has been effected in the three central chapters of this book, in which we learned that Bernard Shaw's writing was not in accordance with the prevailing mode, in which the bastard type of melodrama flourishes, but in the true vein of comedy. Since this last has been unknown since the days of Beaumarchais it is not difficult to understand why the critics were all bewildered by a technique with which they were entirely unfamiliar. When we had classed the work of Bernard Shaw with that

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of the other writers of true comedy, we were led, by a more detailed comparison, to recognize his especial kinship with Molière.

On a superficial glance no resemblance may be noticed between Shaw and Molière; and in view of the enormous and justly deserved reputation of Molière, it is very natural that the first idea of comparing Shaw to Molière should produce a shock. But if we are willing to look beneath the surface, and if we refuse to allow ourselves to be dazzled by the fame of Molière, the kinship of these writers cannot fail to strike us — a kinship manifested in two respects, in the community of their technique, and in the partial community of their philosophy.

I have never said, and have never wished to say, that Bernard Shaw was an imitator of Molière, so that the resemblance between the two writers must be obvious to all. What I have said, and what I repeat, is that Bernard Shaw has appropriated Molière's technique; and that with its aid, having adapted it to his own peculiar individuality, he has written masterpieces of comedy. Every one can verify for himself the kinship of the two writers if he is willing to undertake a careful analysis of the plays. In the case of Molière, indeed, the labour will be unnecessary, for it will suffice to read a few of the books in which the technique

General Considerations on Dramatic Art of the great French comic dramatist has been discussed.<sup>1</sup>

As regards Shaw, an analysis of his plays has been one of the principal objects of the present book, and all that is further necessary is to subjoin a synoptic table setting forth the resemblances between the dramatic works of Molière and of Bernard Shaw. The table will speak for itself.

<sup>1</sup> A few titles may be given. Brunetière, *Études Critiques*, 4<sup>ième</sup> série, "Revue des Deux Mondes," 1906, vol. i.—A. Legrelle, *Holberg considéré comme Imitateur de Molière*.—Jeannel, *La Morale de Molière*.—Albalat, *Comment il faut lire Molière*, "Revue Bleue," August 31, 1912.—Castelin, *Ben Jonson*.—G. Lanson, *Molière et la Farce*, "Revue de Paris," 1901.—Eugène Rigal, *Molière*.

# SYNOPTIC TABLE

## OF THE RESEMBLANCES BETWEEN THE DRAMATIC WORKS OF MOLIÈRE AND OF BERNARD SHAW

### RESEMBLANCES.

### REMARKS.

*Aim* : to instruct, to moralize, and to amuse.

*Action* : vague, tenuous, and more or less incoherent.

*Situations* : often absurd, always subordinated to the characters.

*Plots* : very simple, and often quite unrealizable in practice.

*Incidents* : introduced merely to throw into relief some idea or some point of character. The plays are mere controversies, conversations, discussions. (1)

*Subject* : adultery plays no part, or almost none. Love is by no means conspicuous. (2)

*Dénouement* : indifferent and might almost always be changed without affecting the play.

*Realism* : exact imitation of nature ; profound observation deals with the trifling events of everyday life.

*Depiction of characters* : no absolute types of vice and virtue (3). Uniformity of the characters. Exaggeration and caricature. Sudden

(1) Some of Molière's plays have a central character around whom everything turns, and up to whom everything leads. In Shaw's plays this central figure is replaced by an idea or a series of ideas around which everything turns, and up to which everything leads. Moreover, on careful consideration, may we not say that this applies also to Molière, and that when the central figure is that of Alceste, Don Juan, Tartuffe, or Harpagon, the real pivot of the comedy is, as the case may be, misanthropy, atheism, religion, or avarice ?

(2) The result is that the real subject of the plays is the criticism of manners, of society and its institutions.

(3) Most French critics, and especially MM. Filon, Faguet, and Cestre, declare that Bernard Shaw does depict characters. M. Remy de Gourmont writes : " Molière has never drawn a

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and violent contradiction in the characters. (4)

doctor more comically 'the doctor' than Paramore, nor more characteristic figures of women than those in the same play, *The Philanderer*. The character-drawing is admirable."

(4) In Shaw's plays the characters are less representative of vices or passions than those of Molière, and more representative of class, profession, or sect. Molière depicts the miser, the jealous man, the misanthrope, the hypocrite; whereas Shaw depicts the bourgeois, the rebel, the capitalist, the workman, the socialist, the doctor. A few only of these latter types are given us by Molière.

*Dramatis personæ*: everyday people, no pathological specimens (5).

Collection of knaves and fools (6).

(5) In Shaw, as in Molière, some of the characters border on the pathological, but none cross the line.

(6) Wherever *Mrs. Warren's Profession* has been played, many of the critics have remarked that the piece exhibited a fine collection of knaves and fools. Brunetière said the same of several of Molière's plays, adding: "He thus draws conspicuous attention to the folly or the knavery which is so often hidden beneath the masks of respectability and of virtue.

*Comedy*: all kinds. Rarity of word-plays. Intimate intermingling of the burlesque and of the tragic. Bitter or painful scenes turned into fun. Comedy of ideas. Comedy by the relating of a humorous anecdote. Mockery (7).

(7) M. Charles le Goffie, in an article in "La République Française" (January 1913), has pointed out the resemblances in the comedy of ideas of Shaw and of Molière. — Brunetière qualifies as *mocking* the fun which is made by those who laugh at things in order to save themselves from having to weep. Many critics have noted that Shaw's fun was cutting and full of mockery.

*Farce* (8).

(8) Molière's contemporaries (1663-70) regarded *Don Juan* and *Tartuffe*

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as farces. M. Edmond Sée, reviewing *You Never Can Tell* in "Gil Blas" (January 1913), wrote: "The farce of this play is of a classical form which neither Molière nor Regnard would have repudiated.

*Pathos*: little or none.

*Style*: incorrect (9), concise, language that of everyday life.

Frequent repetition of words, phrases, and ideas in the same play or in a succession of plays.

Pros and cons stated so impartially that it is difficult to ascertain the author's own opinions.

Important rôles allotted to valets, maid-servants, and other plebeians.

Parody of the servant by the master.

Criticism of the customs of the fashionable world, of the bourgeoisie, and of the professions (10).

War against hypocrisy (11).

War against romanticism.

*Family*: family relationships the pivot of the comedy, and invariably exhibited in an odious or ridiculous light (12).

(9) Fénelon, Bayle, La Bruyère, and Vauvenargues have censured Molière for his errors of diction and his mistakes in grammar.

(10) This criticism naturally applies to contemporary customs, and to the customs of the countries especially concerned. Of necessity, therefore, the work of the two dramatists differs when they no longer deal with general characteristics, common to humanity in different countries and at various epochs.

(11) The resemblance between Shaw and Molière in this respect has been pointed out by Le Goffic (*loc. cit.*).

(12) Sometimes we are shown an indulgent father or a devoted mother. The family is an assemblage of persons compelled to live together by law and custom, but with no sentiment of mutual obligation, no feeling of blood-tie, and no affection whatever (Jeannel,

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*La Morale de Molière*). The critics of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *You Never Can Tell* agree in asserting that the children in these plays seem to have absolutely no comprehension of the meaning of the terms "parental authority" or "parental affection." Molière and Shaw appear to be unaware of what a father is, what a father is worth.

Triumph of children over parents, of youth over age.  
School of disrespect (13).

(13) Sons and servants are rude to fathers and masters. The revolt of children against their parents is presented as a duty.

Suicide is never one of the central features of the comedy; if mentioned it is only to be made fun of.

Criticism of established institutions (14).

(14) Such criticism is a much more marked feature of Shaw's work than of that of Molière. Here Bernard Shaw resembles rather Aristophanes, Holberg, Le Sage, and Beaumarchais. No doubt the difference between Molière and Shaw in this matter proceeds from differences in their respective epochs, for we find that criticism of social inequality has already made its appearance in Molière. Moreover, the criticism of Molière and of Shaw sometimes takes the same line. For example, in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and in *Man and Superman* we find the same views expressed regarding trade.

Religion as a subject of plays (15).

(15) For Molière, *Tartuffe* and *Don Juan*; for Shaw, *The Showing up of Blanco Posnet*. In most of Shaw's other plays there are tilts against religion, but this must not be taken as indicating

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that the aim of his work is to indoctrinate with atheism. "Molière," wrote Baillet in 1686, "is one of the most dangerous enemies of the Church to whom the world of secular life has given birth. . . . We assert without hesitation that his plays tend to promote irreligion, and even that *Tartuffe* is one of the least dangerous among them."

Ethics and Philosophy  
(16).

(16) There are two great differences between the philosophy of Bernard Shaw and that of Molière. In the first place, every one of Shaw's works is inspired by the Socialist idea. [For a sociological study of the precise significance of the term "Socialism," the writer may refer to his own work on *Socialisme et Anarchie*.] Secondly, there is a difference in respect of metaphysics, for in Shaw's plays man is a god in the making.

- *Meliorism* : triumph of  
nature over worldly and  
social conventions (17).

(17) Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and the Pastor Goetze of Hamburg, fulminated against the ethics of Molière. In 1667 the Archbishop of Paris condemned *Tartuffe* in an episcopal letter. Bossuet regarded Molière as the incarnation of evil. In a word, Molière was in his time a precursor, a revolutionary, and despite the influence of the King the forces of reaction were marshalled against him. M. Muret, who is anything but an admirer of Shaw, after having pointed out that his dramas are a rich mine of ideas, concludes by saying: "Shaw's work tends to exalt the individual and to glorify his instincts. This writer is a terrible iconoclast, one who respects nothing." To sum up, as regards Shaw, he also is a precursor, a revolutionary, and there are marshalled against him the critics



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of almost all the reactionary or Conservative periodicals. Holberg and Beaumarchais were likewise revolutionary comic dramatists, whereas Aristophanes was to some extent a reactionary.

Brunetière has proved that for Molière the word "nature" signified that which Rabelais expressed as follows : "Persons who are free, well born, and well educated, are endowed by nature with an instinct which ever impels them towards virtue, and repels them from vice" ; while Montaigne wrote as follows : "We should never fail to follow nature . . . The precept of precepts is to conform to nature. Unlike Socrates, I have not corrected, by force of reasoning, my natural tendencies, and I have never disturbed my inclinations by the use of art." Molière is a son of Rabelais and of Montaigne ; and from Molière we pass without interruption to Diderot and to Voltaire, who said : "Man, like the rest of nature, is what he must be." In general during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the naturalist philosophers said : "All things are guided and ruled by Destiny, which is irrevocable, infallible, necessary, and inevitable for all men alike, whatever they may do." As has been shown in this book, such also is the philosophy of Bernard Shaw.

Triumph of common sense (18).

(18) In the year 1908 a German critic, Wasburn Freund, writing in the "Berliner Tagblatt," declared that Bernard Shaw wished to establish the reign of common sense.

Great influence of the plays (19).

(19) This is proved by the vigorous discussions that have been aroused by the comedies of Bernard Shaw no less

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than by those of Molière. For a century past there has been no other dramatic author concerning whom, in his lifetime, so many books have been written. Five have been published in English, by Holbrook Jackson (1907), G. K. Chesterton (1911), Archibald Henderson (1911), Joseph McCabe (1914), Percy Howe (1915); one in German, by Julius Bab (1910); two in French, by Charles Cestre (1912), and Augustin Hamon (1913). He is the sole dramatic author concerning whom, during his lifetime, courses of lectures have been delivered at various universities: as, for example, in Paris by Augustin Hamon (1909, 1910, 1911, 1912); in Bordeaux, by Charles Cestre (1909); in Rennes, by Feuillerat (1913); and in Brussels (1909).

A glance at the above table will show how manifold are the reasons which have led me to term Bernard Shaw the Twentieth Century Molière. It is to Molière alone that Shaw can properly be affiliated; and the contention of certain critics that his work recalls that of Oscar Wilde is based upon an extremely superficial study. In fact, between Wilde and Shaw, there are hardly any resemblances. The only resemblance which may be admitted to exist is a certain analogy in the expression of the ideas, that is to say in the conversation of the characters. Yet even this resemblance is rather apparent than real, for though in the work of both writers the conversation sparkles, in Wilde's case it is far more

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superficial.<sup>1</sup> Wilde is much wittier than Shaw; he is too witty, for he continually sacrifices realism to wit. His dialogue is pungently artificial.

But what a difference in structure between the melodrama of Wilde and the farcial comedy of Shaw. In Wilde, the element of comedy is much less intense, the action is connected, the *dénouement* is dramatic, and is essential to the play; no character drawn from the ranks plays an important part; what is depicted is the manners of the aristocracy of birth or of wealth; the criticism is sometimes severe, but the writer's bias appears in the picture. He does not give us an exposition of pros and cons, for his plays are problem plays, constructed in accordance with the technique of Dumas fils. It may be that Wilde's plays contain more ideas than those of Dumas. And in Wilde's plays we have no character types but only individuals. There is no general philosophy, no profound social criticism of the foundations, of the pillars, of society, such as we find in the comedies of Shaw. This is not to

<sup>1</sup> We may point out that Wilde's first play was staged in 1892, in the same year in which the work of Shaw first made its appearance on the boards. Hence it is impossible that Shaw's technique and ideas can have been influenced by a study of Wilde, as some critics have asserted; for the whole of his technique is exhibited in his first comedy, *Widowers' Houses*; while the essence of all his ideas—his metaphysics excepted—is displayed in his novels (*The Irrational Knot*, *An Unsocial Socialist*, *Love among the Artists*, and *Cashel Byron's Profession*), which were written between 1879 and 1883.

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deny that Oscar Wilde's dramas are extremely interesting, worthy to make their appearance on the Parisian stage, beside those of Hervieu, Donnay, Bataille, Capus, Lavedan, Bernstein, and even Brioux—although the work of the last-named is on a far higher plane. But none of these talented dramatists are comparable to Bernard Shaw, who, as M. Remy de Gourmont puts it, "is a dramatist of genius, the only dramatist of genius now alive in Europe, and his dramas are the only ones which give intimations of a lofty and profoundly original life."

Ernest Rhys, G. K. Chesterton, and Emil Faguet have compared Bernard Shaw with Voltaire, and with good reason, if we think of Shaw only as a satirist and as a thinker. But the dramatic technique of Voltaire is that of tragedy, not of comedy. When we recognize the kinship of Shaw with Molière, we think of Shaw the comic dramatist. If, on the other hand, in considering the affiliations of Bernard Shaw we have in mind the satirist, the thinker, and the philosopher, it is to Swift, to Voltaire, and to Proudhon that our attention will turn.

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The interest of Bernard Shaw's plays is universally and eternally human. He does not confine himself to criticizing the manners, the customs, and

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the institutions of a single nation. His criticism deals with the manners, the customs, and the institutions of humanity at large. When a comic dramatist satirizes the manners and the ideas of some particular society (nation, special professional group, etc.), he always produces numerous comic effects which are untranslatable into another language. But this does not happen with Bernard Shaw, for in his plays there are very few comic effects which are untranslatable, and the absence of these is of such trifling importance that the general comic force is altogether unaffected by their suppression.

Shaw's work rises to the level of the universally human, that is, as Wagner expressed it, of the universally intelligible. It is understood by people of divers nations. His success does not depend upon any sudden emotional wave, or upon transient enthusiasm; it is progressive, and firmly established. Everywhere we find partisans and opponents, more or less impassioned, of the Shavian comedy. There are Shavians and anti-Shavians, just as there were Molièrists and anti-Molièrists, Gluckists and anti-Gluckists, Wagnerites and anti-Wagnerites.

And the Shavians gain ground from the anti-Shavians. In the case of Bernard Shaw's works, the same thing will happen that happened in the

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case of *Le Barbier de Séville*, "which was in very poor taste, was the most platitudinous play ever written"; as happened in the case of the music of Wagner, of the painting of Courbet, of Manet, and of Degas, of the sculpture of Rodin; as has almost always been the case, throughout human history, with the masterpieces of art and of science. Insensibly and unconsciously, as the years pass, the great majority of the public grows accustomed to the works of the innovators, and learns to appreciate them. They become familiar; they no longer appear new; and they therefore cease to shock. But among these new works it is the business of the far-sighted critic to distinguish those that are great and beautiful, and to proclaim his discovery everywhere, regardless of the laughter he arouses and of the gibes which are showered upon him. Posterity will ratify his opinion.

As a comic dramatist, Bernard Shaw ranks with Molière—not as an imitator, but as an equal. The Shavian comedy is great in virtue of its comedy, its ideas, its social satire, its ethical trend, and its depiction of characters—just as is the comedy of Molière. Like the latter, the Shavian comedy will endure for centuries; and as these centuries pass the more complete will be the recognition of the power and the greatness of his work. Whatever may be the fate of my comparison of Shaw to

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Molière, Shaw's plays remain, and their greatness is independent of comparisons, independent of the past, for they belong to the future.

They always induce thought, these plays, which like life are overburdened with detail, and like life have more than one meaning. But the central idea in all the plays is the same. NATURE IS ALWAYS VICTORIOUS OVER ALL THE CONVENTIONS, SOCIAL, WORLDLY, OR RELIGIOUS.

But while this idea is the centre of the intellectual action, other ideas abound to a degree which is almost a defect in this drama which is at once determinist, almost fatalist, socialist, destructive, anarchist, iconoclast, ethical, and philosophical.

It is determinist, for in the plays man is subject to his destiny, and what must be must be. It is socialist, for the author shows the exploitation of man by man, and the predominance of the economic factor in the determination of thoughts and actions. It is anarchist, for he analyses and dissects everything without the smallest respect: the family, authority, government, justice, commerce, industry, education, individual property, the bourgeoisie, the idea of duty, the aristocracy, wealth, the magistracy, the bar, journalism, religion, the clergy, militarism, morality. . . . It is iconoclast, for it is a school of disrespect for traditions and conventions.

It ridicules the images and ideas that are beloved

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of the elderly, who have already been touched by the hand of death, so that they have become incapable of understanding the beauty, the greatness, and the vital force of all that is new.

While doing this it moralizes, for alike in art, literature, the drama, science, and in our manners and customs, we should always love novelty. We should love what is new simply because it is new, because it is something which is seeking to supercede that which has been already seen, already written, already played—that which already exists.

The new, this is youth, the future, with its impetuosity and its ardent vitality. That which has been, that which exists, is the antique, the past, old age, feeble and decrepit ; sometimes still beautiful, but out of harmony with the future, incapable of understanding youth. The new is truly life ; the old is truly death. To love what is new, simply because it is new—even if it be sometimes puerile, and less beautiful than what already exists—is to aid the rapid march of progress, to contribute towards the realization of discoveries and inventions, to assist in the creation of works of genius of every kind ; for it is to encourage the creators of these, exposed always to the contumely of those already established, misoneists by interest and by disposition. In a word, to love the new is to contribute to the increase of the material, intellectual, and moral well-being of our race.













